SIMMERING VOLCANO

STUDY OF JAMMU'S RELATIONS WITH KASHMIR

By the Same Author

1. *Jammu—A clue to Kashmir Tangle*, published by the author, 1966.
2. *Communism in Kashmir*, Institute of Political and Social Studies, Calcutta, 1961.
3. *Cooperative Farming*, Institute of Political and Social Studies, Calcutta, 1959.
4. *Recreation and Social Revolution*, Vohra, Bombay, 1963.
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6. *State Politics in India* (Chapter on J&K), Princeton Press, USA, 1967.
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STERLING PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED
NEW DELHI-110016 JALANDHAR-144003 BANGALORE-560009

STERLING PUBLISHERS PVT. LTD.
L-10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi-110016
5th Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Bangalore-560009
695, Model Town, Jalandhar City-144003

Simmering Volcano
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Published by S.K. Ghai, Managing Director, Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd., New Delhi-110016 & Printed at Gahlot Printers 1/2317, Ram Nagar, Mandoli Road, Shahdara, Delhi-110032

Introduction

Regional studies are no more taboo in the academic field or in practical politics. Aside from their importance in their own right, they are being increasingly regarded as indispensable aids to the understanding of the national reality.

Recurrent political explosions of varying intensities in Jammu, with wider ramifications, further justify a study of the present kind and its title.

Jammu is neither an appendage nor an extension of Kashmir, the better known region of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In size it is almost double that of Kashmir and comprises over 45 per cent of the population of the whole State. What is more, it is as remote—culturally, politically and emotionally—from the other two regions of Kashmir and Ladakh as it is contiguous to them. Jammu's distinct personality, therefore, entitles it to be studied as an independent subject. While analysing the anatomy of its psychological and political make up, the book takes note of the shades of its tapestried and polyglot personality.

Further, it unfolds the region's complex relations with the rest of the State. Its peculiar juxtaposition of ethnic and religious identities binds it to a common historical and political destiny of the State whereas the unitary constitution imposed on it contains a built-in provision for regional tensions, which are further aggravated by interested or ignorant elements.

The personality and character of the State would largely be shaped by the manner in which the two major and distinct regions of the State react to each other. Moreover, as an inevitable geo-political bridge between Kashmir and the rest of India, happenings in Jammu are bound to have repercussions across either side of the bridge.

Study of "Jámmu: a clue to Kashmir Tangle"—the title of

an earlier work of the author—is therefore indispensable for understanding the politics of Kashmir and the vicissitudes of its relevance to the national identity.

The *Times* London had for these reasons pertinently observed in its comments on the book: "Mr. Puri argues with justice that until Jammu and Kashmir draw closer, settle their differences and agree to operate as equal partners, there will never be a stable basis upon which relations with (the rest of) India can be satisfactorily settled".

A number of favourable developments at the national and subcontinental levels have contributed to improving these relations. But the fact that this basis would remain unstable as long as the Jammu problem is unresolved would be corroborated by Farooq Abdullah's warning, as late as, in November 1982, against the stance of opposition in Jammu which, according to him, would not enable the Indian army and thousands of Indira Gandhis "to prevent Kashmir from going to Pakistan."

The hard reality is that the passage of time has revealed no sign of decline in Jammu's discontent or improvement in its relations with the Valley. Frantic fire brigade type of efforts to defuse the situation in the region whenever it erupted in the past in no way exhausted its volcanic potentialities.

The eruption of 1953 subsided after the dismissal from power and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. Commissions headed by former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court, P.B. Gajendragadkar and S. M. Sikri, were other devices to defuse the situation in 1967 and 1979 respectively. But Abdullah's return to power in 1975 mocked at whatever psychological gain some people in Jammu might have derived 22 years ago. Similarly non-implementation of thoroughly inadequate recommendations of the Commission underlined the futility of their exercises and of the protest movements.

The net outcome of the attempt to articulate regional urges in the demand for abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which grants a social status to the State, was to split Jammu on communal lines and isolate caste Hindus from Scheduled Castes, who were beneficiaries of the land reforms without compensation, which Article 370

permitted. Jammu had also to live down the charge of provoking a secessionist reaction in the Valley through the Praja Parishad agitation of 1953.

The present study traces the history of impotent militancy further back; in the dream of an independent Hindu Raj in the State and of perpetuating monarchy after the first dream was shattered.

Futile and impotent forms of Jammu's protests further encouraged the ruling Kashmiri leaders to treat the region unfairly. The status and quality of Jammu's representation in the power structure of the State continued to decline. Rise in power became inversely proportional to the popularity, self-respect and competence of the aspirants. It degenerated into a competition for self-humiliation. In particular, Hindu representatives of the region in the Government had invariably lost their security deposits in assembly elections.

The author is not merely a passive observer of the unwitting alliance between those who tried to divert the urges and energies of Jammu into frustrating channels and those who tried to humiliate it. No account of Jammu politics would be complete and fair that does not refer to my own role therein.

I belonged to a parallel school of thought which sought a place of honour and respect for Jammu by articulating regional urges in realistic and constructive terms. It campaigned for accession to India in 1947 against the slogan of independence. It favoured the termination of monarchy and Artice 370 but insisted that power transferred from the Maharaja and the Centre to the State must be equitably shared by all regions. It contributed to the consolidation of an integrated personality of Jammu by supporting land reforms and defending the rights of backward communities and the minorities of the region. By its better perception of the Kashmiri aspirations and national interest, it played a crucial role in Kashmir's emotional re-integration with the rest of the country and the Kashmir Accord of 1975.

These policies did bring ample dividends to Jammu. As a result of our campaign, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah incorporated the idea of regional autonomy in the

Delhi Agreement signed by them in July 1952. Shyamaprasad Mukerjee offered to support Article 370 provided it was accompanied by regional autonomy. The late Jayaprakash Narayan also blessed the idea. The *Hindustan Times* story on Jammu agitation, reported by Sunder Rajan, counted 26 reiterations by Abdullah of his commitment to regional autonomy. In fact one of the bases of my friendship with him was my support for the State's autonomy within India and his support for autonomy of the regions (including Jammu) within the State.

This friendship certainly helped me in contributing my mite to the solution of the Kashmir problem and in thus serving a vital national interest. But it is a matter of deep personal regret for me that the Sheikh could not honour his commitment to Jammu. We did resume our dialogue five years after my inexplicable expulsion from the National Conference in 1977. My prolonged meeting with him in April 1982, did refer to Jammu politics in the context of national and State problems. But the dialogue could not proceed further, as decided by us, as he fell ill soon after and died later.

While I would not absolve the Sheikh or other Kashmiri leaders and Delhi of their responsibility in not implementing agreed solutions, can a part of Jammu leadership be absolved of its responsibility in opposing these solutions and diverting Jammu's urges to blind alleys ?

An autographical or personal note in the book adds to its authenticity without in any way compromising its objectivity. The first person 'I', frequently used in it often includes my esteemed colleagues whose contribution is very valuable. But if names have not been mentioned, it is mainly because I could not commit them to all the details of my stand.

The present volume, however, does not end on a pessimistic note altogether. For out of the two contending schools for articulation of regional aspirations, the one representing regional autonomy has apparently prevailed, not in the political or party sense but in the sense of an idea. Its erstwhile opponents are giving up their misgiving and apprehensions.

The intelligentsia in all the three regions appreciate the utility of the federal principle not only as a secure basis of an

integrated State but also as a means for promoting their respective regional interests. The success of the idea would depend upon the extent to which the underlying philosophy of secularism and socio-economic equality is imbibed. However, the reverse is no less true. Federal process and recognition of regional identities, too, would release secularising forces in the State.

In this context, the role of Delhi and Srinagar, which more than the local factors, determines Jammu's effective leadership, becomes important. Both have encouraged the growth of a third category of politics, aside from the two contending schools referred to above, which have no commitments and is exclusively trained in the art of operating power. No doubt it is an expanding category. But can it be an effective answer to the volcano that is simmering in the region ?

It should not be difficult to see from past experience that the solution of the Jammu problem is in the interests of Kashmir and the nation. It is a part of the enormously complex diversity called Jammu and Kashmir State. If it can be turned into a laboratory for integration, the whole country would benefit by its achievements. If, God forbid, the opportunity is missed, the eruptions might cause tremors far beyond the epicentre.

The problem of Jammu, more than that of many other regions, is in short, a national problem.

The viewpoint developed in the book is therefore addressed not only to the people of Jammu and enlightened Kashmiris but to all patriotic Indians also.

March 1983
Jammu-180005

Balraj Puri

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I

Jammu Personality

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh became parts of a single political entity called Jammu and Kashmir State in 1846 when the British East India Company transferred the Valley of Dashmir which it had acquired from the disintegrating Lahore Durbar, to the Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu in consideration of a sum of rupees seventy-five lakhs. Gulab Singh's general Zorawar Singh had already subjugated Ladakh to his empire in 1934.

Treaty of Amritsar signed on 18 May 1846, by the Company and the Maharaja, formally conceded Gulab Singh's title, alongwith that of his male heirs, under the overall British suzerainty, over "all the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the river Indus, and westward of the River Ravi."

Autonomous Status

Boundaries of the present Jammu region have undergone many changes, its numerous principalities had their own alignments with neighbouring kingdoms. Tradition refers to 22 states of the region of which Jammu was called the "Sardar". These States have been identified as follows: Akhnur, Bhimber, Kishtwar, Khari-Khariali, Kotali, Punch, Rajouri, Reasi, Bahu, Balor, Bandralta (Ram Nagar), Bhaderwah, Bhadu, Bhoti, Chaneni, Dalpatpur, Jasrota, Lakhanpur, Mankote (Ramkote), Samba, Trikot and Jammu. Some of these states were ruled by members of the same family. By the time of Emperor Shah Jahan, the hill chieftains of Jammu "settled down quietly to

the position of feudatories, and carried out the order of the Delhi Court." They were, however, able to retain their autonomy and the Mughals generally did not interfere much in their internal affairs, except in 1973 when Emperor Mohammad Shah, alarmed at the ambitions of Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu, sent an expedition to punish and arrest him. Raja was imprisoned in Lahore and Jammu was annexed to the Mughal empire for 12 years. In 1745 Jammu was restored to the Raja under the Mughal suzerainty.

In 1757 Jammu became a tributary of the Afghan empire.

Jammu again came under direct outside rule for a brief period from 1808 to 1820, after the Dogra ruler Ajit Singh surrendered to Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Punjab. But during this period, a resistance movement led by the legendary hero Mian Deedo continued against the Punjabi rule till Gulab Singh was installed as Raja of Jammu in 1820 under his overall lordship, which ended in 1846. Thereafter he accepted the British suzerainty.

Surgical Operation

After independence of the country and accession of the State to the Indian Union, its partition in 1947 struck a serious blow to the prestige and personality of Jammu. It was the most populous region of the State before independence. According to the Census of 1941, its population was 1981, 433 as against 1464,034 of Kashmir Valley. The surgical operation called the cease-fire line of 1949—later rationalised and named line of actual control after the Indo-Pak war of 1971—cut a major portion of Jammu region off the State while its other cultural units like Kashmir and Ladakh remained more or less intact.

Large-scale communal bloodshed and transfer of Hindu and Muslim populations across the line caused not only untold suffering to the people but also distorted the character of Jammu. The rehabilitation problem of hundreds of thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees displaced from Pakistan and settled in different parts of the State, lingered even after three decades of independence, causing many tensions in the region.

The cease-fire line changed Jammu's Muslim majority into

a minority while most of the Muslim leadership of the region migrated or was transferred by the State Government to Pakistan during those troubled days.

Jammu was also the worst sufferer in the subsequent Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. Out of 210 square miles of Indian territory invaded by Pakistani forces in 1965, 190 square miles lay in the Chhamb sector of Jammu. The thrust of the raiders, too, was deepest in the region, beyond 100 miles, between the Pir Panchal range and the Chenab. Again, out of a total displaced population of 2,70,000 as many as 2,50,000 belonged to Jammu. The latter estimate was subsequently revised to 3,00,000. If we include Muslim refugees also who fled in opposite directions, the number would be colossal, affecting at least every fourth household in the region as a whole. (See my article on "What Jammu has suffered" in *Hindustan Times*, 25 November 1965).

About a lakh of persons were again uprooted in the war of 1971. The problem of their rehabilitation dragged on for almost a decade.

Diversities

Apart from problems bequeathed to the region by war and politics, natural factors also contribute to lack of its unity and stability. Unlike other regions of the State, it abounds in geographical, cultural, linguistic, communal, caste and class diversities. Its kaleidoscopic diversity is confined within a small range of well defined boundaries. Bounded by the Ravi and the Pir Panchal range, its altitude varies from almost sea level to 16,000 feet. The rise is so steep that while the city of Jammu—the winter capital of the State—on occasions records the highest temperature in the country, the snow line is not farther than thirty miles from it.

In terms of number of religious communities living in the region and languages and dialects spoken by its people, the diversity is equally pronounced. According to the census of 1981, the population of the region is 27 lakhs which is 45 per cent of the total population of the State and lives in an area of over 26,000 square kilometers. Hindus constitute 62 per cent of the region's population while 33.8 per cent of it are Muslims.

The scheduled castes, whose percentage of population in the region is 18.3, constitute 31 per cent of the Hindu community, which is further divided on caste lines. Other communities of Jammu include Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Buddhists.

Out of the three regions of the Jammu and Kashmir State, Jammu is now—i.e. after partition—number two in population as well area. Kashmir Valley with two-fifths of its area outnumbers it by just three lakhs while sparsely populated Ladakh is four times in territory.

Single largest linguistic community is that of Dogras. Dogri is the mother-tongue of about 54 per cent of the population. Other principal languages spoken in the region are Kashmiri (1,95,114), Gojri (2,23,193), Pahari (1,95,377), Punjabi (1,77,805) apart from dialects spoken by a smaller number including Bhaderwahi, Poonchi, Siraji, Kishtwari, Pothoari, Padari, Poguli etc. (See Table on p. 133).

Cultural Layers

The predominant influence on the personality of Jammu is of course of the Dogra community concentrated mainly in the central belt of the region, around the Kandi, rocky plateau of 2 to 4 thousand feet high. On its south and west, the Dogra cultural mainstream gets mixed up on its borders with cultural currents overflown from the East and the West Punjab. Towards the north, it merges into cultural currents like that of Kashmir, Gujars and local variety. An overflow of Dogra culture is also discernible in the adjoining areas of Chamba and Kangra in the Himachal Pradesh.

While some names in scriptures and ancient classics bear resemblance to names of places and rivers of Jammu, there is no authentic account of people who have been living in this region. The earliest references to Dogri language is found in the poetry of the Sufi poet Amir Khusro, six centuries ago.

Without a knowledge of evolution of Dogri before and after that, the history of Dogras will remain incomplete. Much further research is clearly needed to identify various cultural and racial layers which comprise the foundation and components of the modern Dogra culture.

One of the earliest settlers in Jammu was perhaps the community of Gujars. They are believed to have entered India in the 6th century B.C. and first settled on the Siwaliks which run through Jammu. Dr. R.D. Bhandarkar is of the view that Gujars first inhabiting Siwaliks were annointed by Brahmins as Kshatriyas for their Kshatriya-like qualities. In this guise they clamped down on what is now Rajasthan and founded the States of Rajputana and emerged as Rajputs. Their pastoral brethren who stayed behind later embraced Islam. Some of the fighter Gujar-Rajputs, fled back, after centuries, due to political vicissitudes to their former abode and were successful in carving out for themselves big or small principalities. The story of return and conquest of Jammu by Rajput princes is, according to Dr. Karan Singh, the last Dogra prince of the State, not older than four centuries. But common ancestry and kinship between Gujars, Rajputs and Jats is established by other evidence also.

Another ancient community of Jammu to which references have been made in the old scriptures as also in the Rajtarangini is what was called Takks who are believed to be the ancestors of modern Thakkars and who invented Takri the original script of Dogri. It is difficult to identify the descendants of the Khash tribes who inhabited Jammu even before Takks and Gujars. Perhaps they were driven away or reduced to low caste status. Khash is still a word of contempt in Dogri to describe simple hilly people. A large Harijan population—31 per cent of the Hindu population—in Jammu further suggests the existence of some pre-Aryan aborigines in Jammu. Comparatively recently, Brahmans from Uttar Pradesh, Jains and Khatries from Punjab and Arorvanshis from Multan came to settle in Jammu.

Except for small principalities on the periphery of Jammu, it has never been ruled by a Muslim. But Muslims constituted a majority of the population of the undivided Jammu. Even after its partition in 1947, Muslim percentage in its population is around 34 per cent. A part of it migrated from Punjab and Kashmir due to compulsion of political events or natural calamities and attracted by the generous treatment they received from Dogra rulers like Ranjit Dev. Most of them are converts

under the influence of Sufi preachers like Sayyid Farid-ud-Din and his son Israr-ud-Din, who lie buried in Kishtwar. Budhan Shah, a contemporary and friend of Guru Nanak and Roshan Shah Wali are both buried near Jammu city. These saints are revered by Hindus and Muslims alike. Their Ziarats are attended by a large number of Hindu devotees also.

Likewise, Muslims participate in some of the semi-religious Hindu festivals. Kud, Phumni and Bhangra are the main seasonal dances—festivals of Pahari region, Kandi and the plains respectively. Like most of the cultural currents of Jammu, Phumni style is just in between the other two dances of the flanking areas. Its devotional and musical character resembles the Kud while in vigour and motions, it is like the Bhangra.

Bhakti Movement

A secular festival observed with religious zeal at Jhiri, 12 miles from Jammu town is on the martyrdom of Bawa Jito, who immolated himself five hundred years ago in protest against his landlord's refusal to honour the commitment of giving him three-fourths of the produce on the land he had tilled. Jito is mentioned in some folk songs alongwith Pir Kho a Hindu Saint and Peer Mitha, a Muslim saint. Their memorials are also built in Jammu city. Budhan Shah was also their contemporary. All of them were influenced by the Bhakti movement prevalent in the rest of the country in those days.

While Deedo is the symbol of the patriotic spirit of a common man, Jito symbolises his egalitarian and spiritual aspirations.

Most of Jammu's folklore, legends, beliefs, written and unwritten literature are woven around the two images of Jito and Deedo, which have shaped Jammu's mind and personality in no mean measure.

Artistic Heritage

Jammu's immortal contribution to the national culture, however, is in the fields of Pahari music and Pahari Art. Soul stirring Pahari music—and ragas like Jhanjoti and Durga based on it—is an extremely precious heritage of the Pahari

region which includes Jammu. In recent times also Jammu has produced outstanding singers and musicians, like Malika Pukhraj, Allah Rakha and K. L. Sehgal.

The Jammu Kalam has made a distinct contribution to the galaxy of Pahari paintings, which constitute one of the richest chapters in the history of Indian Art and have already been accorded a place of honour in the artistic heritage of the world. From the sixteenth century to the dawn of the present century, Siwalik ranges had been the abode of the art of painting in India. Among the Pahari schools of painting, at least four centres flourished in Jammu viz. Jammu proper, Basohli, Ramkot and Poonch. There were minor centres at Jasrota, Bandralta and Kishtwar also. Most of the authors of the internationally renowned masterpieces of Pahari or Dogra Art are anonymous. However, the painter of the celebrated complete series of colourful illustrations to the great Sanskrit love poem, Gita Govinda, has been identified as Manaku (1730 A.D.) who must rank as one of the greatest painters of his age.

It is also known that Nain Sukh, Vijan Didi and other talented artists adorned the court of Raja Balwant Dev of Jammu around mid-18th century.

The Kangra style was transplanted on the local soil when Nandlal migrated to Jammu in the Durbar of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. His grandson Harichand rose to further fame. Harichand's pupil Jagat Ram kept alive the classical tradition. With his death in 1922 the last knell of the Pahari art was sounded, almost unnoticed.

Painting was preceded by plastic art. The vast sculptural treasures of Jammu, writes M. S. Randhawa, in introduction to *Basohli Paintings*, pose a serious challenge to the archaeologist and the historian. Special mention must be made of pieces of terra cotta, recently unearthed in Akhnoor, sculptures in Babor, Billawar and Krimchi. Sculptures are closely linked with the architect of the age. Some of them are the idols installed in the temples. Others are human and animal figures or decorative pieces in the palaces. Vigne, the French traveller who visited Basohli between 1835-39, describes its palaces as "the very finest building of the kind I had seen in the East".

While most of the monuments of Basohli were constructed in the 18th century, other masterpieces of sculpture and architecture mentioned above belong to the late Gupta period of eighth to eleventh century.

The intense, highly charged feeling of the folk, according to Elphinstone (*History of India*), sought expression in multifarious forms of clay and brass images, ritualistic drawings and paintings. The folk poet, however, who had not to depend upon the court patronage as the sculptor and artist did, provided a more uninhibited, spontaneous and genuine expression to the folk aspirations. Songs extolling glory of saints and heroes, songs sung by peasants in the fields, shepherds on hill tops, by men and women on festivals, marriages and other ceremonies give a truer insight into the life of Jammu than done by chroniclers and artists of the Durbar.

Drawing upon the rich folk tradition—in content and melody—current Dogri renaissance has thrown up quite a number of writers of merit. In the last three decades Dogri literature has been enriched by almost three hundred books in prose and poetry.

Intangibles

Besides the tangible parts of the structure of Jammu's cultural heritage, its plinth, mortar and other invisible parts were provided by the common experiences and sufferings, loves and hates, hopes and despair of the people which may not get formal expression but leave an indelible mark on their mind. A large number of Samadhis of unknown Satis—and those women who committed suicide—scattered round the countryside are monuments of the guilty conscience of the Dogra society. How many Chenchlos failed to get their Kunjus, how many lovers entered into suicide pacts like that of Gilmo and Bhago, nobody can count. But who can deny that pathos of their life and death are an inalienable part of Dogra ethos.

Jitos, Manakus, Deedos, Chenchlos do not figure in most of the history books of Jammu. But Jammu owes to them for most of what it is today.

Similarly the martial adventures of Hindus and Muslims of Jammu are a part of their common heritage. They have shed

their blood together in many expeditions—defensive and offensive—including the revolt against the Lahore Durbar, conquest of Kashmir and Ladakh and nibbling into territories of China, Tibet and areas beyond Gilgit.

Thus a variety of tangible and intangible factors, cultural and racial elements, historical traditions, and memories and geographical boundaries—between the Ravi and Pir Panchal—have contributed to the evolution of the present personality of Jammu.

Regional Consciousness

A faster and more pronounced form of growth of regional consciousness took place after 1947. Partly it was due to a reaction against the dominating position of Kashmiri leadership in the post-independence power structure of the State and the far more homogeneous and distinctive nature of Kashmiri personality—with 94 per cent Muslims and nearly 90 per cent Kashmiri speaking population—which automatically carved out regional identities on its either side; further separating it from Jammu by the geographical barrier of the Pir Panchal range and from Ladakh by the Zojila. The process of modernisation, politicisation and democratisation was also responsible for enhancing a sense of regional self-awareness. For the same reason there has been resurgence of sub-cultural identities within the region. The renaissance of Dogri, Gojri and Pahari cultures in the recent past bears that out.

The post-independence politics of Jammu into a large extent is the story of not only inter-regional relations but also of intraregional relations between religious and cultural identities within the region.

II

Moment of Indecision

Jammu's misfortunes are in no mean measure due to the indecision of its leadership and the then ruler of the State on the issue of accession in 1947, when India became independent and was partitioned into two Dominions.

Jammu and Kashmir State was in fact one of those Indian princely States which did not join the Constituent Assembly of India set up under the Cabinet Mission Plan announced on 14 May, 1946; despite threats by Jawaharlal Nehru to declare such States as hostile. Muslim League's full support to "the Sovereign rights of the rulers" obviously sustained recalcitrance of these states against the pressure of the Congress leaders.

Even after the final withdrawal of the British from the Indian sub-continent on 15 August, 1947, the indecision of the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir State continued till the tribal raid from across the border tried to forcibly annex it with Pakistan Forced to seek the help of the Indian army for the defence of the State, the Maharaja did offer to accede to India. But on the fateful day of signing the Instrument of Accession on 26 October, 1947, he confessed, in his covering letter to the Governor General of India, that he wanted time to decide "whether it is not in the best interest of both the Dominions and my State to stand independent, of course with friendly and cordial relations with both". Explaining reasons for his decision of not acceding to the Dominion of India or Pakistan, he argued : "Geographically my State is contiguous to both the Dominions. It has vital economical

and cultural links with both of them. Besides my State has a common boundary with the Soviet Republic and China. In their external relations, the Dominions of India and Pakistan cannot ignore this fact."

Even earlier, his Government had given enough indications of the fact that he was aspiring for an independent status for his State. His Dy. Minister Rai Bahadur Ram Lal Batra evidently reflected the mind of his master when he said, in a press interview on 13 October 1947 that despite innumerable difficulties the state is determined to stick to its neutrality. On 15 October the State Prime Minister Mehar Chand Mahajan expressed the hope, at a press conference, that "Kashmir would once again become the cradle of culture of not only India and Pakistan but of the entire civilized world and it would be called the Switzerland of the East." He gave an assurance that the State "will always remain on friendliest of terms with the two Dominions". He further claimed that the Independence Act gave complete authority to the ruler, in exercise of his sovereign rights, on this matter.

Support for Independence

The Maharaja was publicly supported in his stand by leaders of Muslim Conference and Hindu Sabha both of which were mainly based in Jammu. Chaudhri Hamidullah Khan, the acting President of the Muslim Conference, in a press statement on 10 May, 1947, urged His Highness to "declare Kashmir independent immediately and establish a separate constituent assembly to frame the constitution for the State according to the wishes of the people". He offered the cooperation of Muslims in carrying out this policy and to welcome "the Maharaja Bahadur as t' e first constitutional ruler of independent and democratic Kashmir". He also declared that in the event of Pakistan's invasion on Kashmir, "Muslims of the State will rise in arms against Pakistan and if necessity demands they will seek Indian help."

Jammu and Kashmir Rajya Hindu Sabha did not lag behind in its support for Independence of the State. Its leaders argued that a "Hindu State", which J&K State was claimed to be should not merge its identity in a secular India.

The Working Committee of the All Jammu and Kashmir Rajya Hindu Sabha formally adopted a resolution in May 1947 reiterating its faith in the Maharaja and extended "its support to whatever he was doing or might do on the issue of accession."

Campaign for India

Despite royal displeasure and opposition of fanatic Hindus a band of secular Hindus of Jammu carried on a relentless campaign for accession to the Indian Union. A Jammu daily *Ranbir*, edited by Mulk Raj Saraf, spearheaded the campaign. The paper was banned by the State Government for pleading the case of accession to India and release of Sheikh Abdullah.

As one of the workers of the Jammu Provincial National Conference, I joined the campaign and along with others organized its meeting on 20 June 1946 which condemned the idea of independent Kashmir and resolved that the wisest course was to join the Indian Union. The meeting also reiterated its faith in the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah. The Hindu chauvinists soon launched a crusade against pro-India elements describing the demand for accession to India as "anti-Hindu".

Meanwhile growing understanding between Indian leadership and the Kashmiri nationalists led by Sheikh Abdullah started causing misgivings in Pakistan. Moreover the strategy of the Maharaja to bypass the "nationalists",—who insisted on a share in power and on the sovereignty of the people, and build the edifice of an independent State on the support of Hindu and Muslim extremists—who acknowledged Maharaja's sovereignty and his right to decide the issue of accession—also misfired. For as the communal tension mounted in the neighbouring areas of India and Pakistan as also in the part of the State, loyalty to ruler became two brittle a uniting force between his Hindu and Muslim subjects who started gravitating towards India and Pakistan respectively.

Suspicious of the growing strength of the nationalists in Kashmir and their intentions, Pakistan started pressurising the State as well as tempting its ruler to join Pakistan.

The State Muslim Conference also changed its stand. In a resolution passed at a convention in Srinagar on 19 July,

1947 under the presidentship of Chaudhri Hamidullah Khan, the Conference "respectfully and fervently appealed to the Maharaja Bahadur to declare internal autonomy of the State as soon as possible and himself assuming the position of a constitutional monarch, establish a constitutional assembly and simultaneously accede to Dominion of Pakistan in the matter relating to defence, communications and external affairs."

Hindu Sabha, too realised the implications of independence and its lack of viability in view of growing Muslim hostility to the idea. However, in a bid to bring about a compromise between pro-India and pro-independence factions of the party, Pandit Prem Nath Dogra moved a compromise resolution in the party which left it to the Maharaja to decide the issue of accession to India at an "appropriate time".

Drift

But the ruler continued to drift. On the eve of independence and partition of the country, he sought stand-still Agreement with the Dominions of India and Pakistan, in the hope that he could carve out an independent State in friendship with both.

While an agreement was signed between the State and Pakistan, it could not be done in case of India. The Government of India, instead advised the Maharaja to seek the cooperation of Sheikh Abdullah and take steps to introduce responsible government.

Even Pakistan honoured the stand-still Agreement in breach. Essential supplies to the State were stopped, communication lines blocked and tension started mounting on the State's border with Pakistan.

While the State Government entreated with Pakistan "to get as worthy a treatment as from a good neighbour" and offered to hold "an impartial inquiry to remove misunderstanding and to restore cordial relations," raids from across the border in Pakistan had started.

On 26 October when tribesmen armed and organized by Pakistan government reached almost the outskirts of Srinagar, the Maharaja sent his Prime Minister Mehar Chand Mahajan

seek the aid of the Indian Army and "accept all the terms of India." Having conveyed his master's message, Mahajan indiscreetly added "the army must fly to Srinagar this evening, otherwise I will go and negotiate terms with Jinnah". This naturally infuriated Nehru who believed that Mahajan and his boss had been blackmailing India by hob-nobbing with Pakistan. He asked Mahajan to "get out". The situation was saved by Sheikh Abdullah who pacified Nehru and sent in his chit from the adjoining room, where he was sitting, stressing the urgency of the situation.

The Instrument of Accession was signed on 26 October, 1947 and Indian military operations to clear the State of the invading tribesmen also started forthwith.

While Pakistan's objective was to dissuade Maharaja from joining India and encourage him to remain independent or join Pakistan on whatever terms, Jinnah unlike Indian leaders, had conceded sovereign rights of the princes, after the lapse of British paramountcy. His personal secretary Khurshid Ahmad, who stayed in Kashmir for several months during the fateful controversy over accession assured His Highness that "Pakistan would not touch a hair of his head or take away an iota of his power." Indian leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, on the other hand, continued to warn the prince against dangers of indecision and aspiring to be independent.

Gandhi had warned that if the Maharaja did not act quickly taking the people into confidence, it might cause "not merely the possible loss of throne to the present Maharaja but even the disappearance of the State as a unit." Nehru prophetically warned in September 1947 (in his letter to Patel) that "Pakistan's strategy is to infiltrate into Kashmir now and to take some big action as soon as Kashmir is more or less isolated because of its coming winter." He wanted the Maharaja to follow the only course open to him viz, make a friendly approach to National Conference and declare accession to the Indian Union. Once the State acceded to India, he argued, it "will become difficult for Pakistan to invade it officially or unofficially without coming into conflict with the Indian Union."

Sardar Patel's Ministry of State went out of its way to give

assurance to the Maharaja that even accession to Pakistan would not be taken amiss by India. This was obviously intended to further help the indecisive ruler to make up his mind in time.

Though the writing on the wall, logic and national interest unmistakably suggested an early decision on the State's accession to India, the ruler, backed by the dominant leadership of Jammu of the time, delayed it till he lost all initiative and was not able to save a part of the territory of the State from being taken over by the raiders from Pakistan. In fact, on account of its indecision at one of the most vital moments in the history of India, the Jammu leadership lost all initiative in the internal politics of the State also; the consequences of which the region continued to face thereafter.

Blinkered view

The indecision of the effective leaders of the time, in turn, can be traced to their feudal and communal loyalties which blinkered them from taking an overview of the common interest of the region or the State, not to speak of the interest of the Indian nation.

While the wise leadership of Kashmir Valley kept its grip over the situation, was clear about its objective and established a unique record of communal harmony under most trying circumstances, Jammu lost its way and was soon soaked in human blood. The riot wave that rocked almost the entire region, causing mass killings and untold miseries, was an inevitable outcome of the communal politics of its leaders and their indecision on the accession issue.

Whatever be the estimates of loss of life, honour and property of the respective communities, the damage caused to the soul of Jammu is inestimable. The trail of bitterness in the hearts and minds of the people was the single greatest disability from which the region continued to suffer in its subsequent role.

Secular Crusade

It would, however, be unfair not to record, in this context, the heroic crusade of the secular nucleus of Jammu's politics

which stemmed and reversed the tide of communal hatred. Had Delhi and Srinagar not let down the vital interests of the region, the State and the country would have been reconciled in a far better manner than has been the case.

The traditional leadership of Jammu served the new vested interests as well and hence managed to survive. We will have further occasions in the following pages to refer to its role and its enormous capacity of indecision on many a vital moment and effect thereof on the politics of the region.

III

Vacuum in Jammu

Many illusions of the people of Jammu were shattered by events during and after 1947. Above all the so-called Hindu Raj proved vulnerable against the tribal raid from Pakistan. Describing the post-accession situation in Jammu I observed in 1949:

> "Perfect communal harmony in the Valley, Sheikh Abdullah's emergence as a saviour of Hindus and the national interests and the drama of the state's accession to India in October 1947 shook the conscience and mind of every Hindu of Jammu. Gandhi's assassination in January 1948 seemed almost the proverbial last nail in the coffin of communalism in Jammu. The neuclei of the students, Chenani and Poonch movements, National Conference and Congress groups soon grouped together and expanded to partially fill the growing vacuum, created by the receding forces of communalism. Muslim Conference disappeared after the exodus and deportation of bulk of its leaders to Pakistan while Hindu Sabha was dissolved" (*Ranbir*, Jammu, 15/16 June, 1949).

However, the vacuum proved to be too big and the effort of the National Conference to fill it proved too small. So far the party which essentially represented the regional patriotism of Kashmir Valley, had confined its activities to that region. It failed to extend its base in Jammu. Firstly because it was inhibited by its basic philosophy i.e., regional patriotism of Kashmir. Secondly Kashmiri leaders did not have much contact with and trust in the Jammu workers of their party;

which functioned in an ad-hoc manner with repeated changes in the composition of its committees at various levels in the region. No committee earned the confidence of Kashmiri leaders to stay long enough and to strike at its roots.

Another anomaly was created by the person of the Maharaja. His rivalry with Abdullah was a peculiar mixture of personal, communal, regional and ideological elements. While Abdullah was acknowledged as a leader of Kashmiri Muslims and their democratic aspirations it was considered natural—as stated by the Union Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—for non-Muslims "to regard the Maharaja as symbol of their safety." (Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Ed. Durga Dass)

Communal Coalition

This uneasy ccalition between a democratic leader and a constitutional ruler representing two communities was untenable on many grounds. For the constitutional ruler could not provide the type of leadership that a democratic system required. He could not mobilise the people under the banner of a political party. Nor could he give public expression to their aspirations. Moreover while the Maharaja could legitimately be a symbol of feudal interest and socio-economic statusque, what was to be done with the secular, egalitarian and democratic aspirations of non-Muslims as also the Muslims of Jammu?

The initiative to resolve this dilemma was taken by a group of Dogra patriots who asserted that the institution of monarchy was the biggest stumbling block in the satisfaction of the popular aspirations of Jammu region. All Jammu National Youth Conference which was formed in May, 1948 specifically proclaimed that the political power from the autocratic ruler be transferred to the people of Jammu. For that objective it demanded "complete abolition of autocracy." It alleged that a section of Kashmiri leadership did not "allow the people of Jammu to stand on their own legs" and it "imposed reactionary elements and government puppets in the Jammu National Conference."

Anti-Monarchy Move

The abdication demand was supported by prominent leaders of Jammu. Gopal Dutt Mengi and Jyotshi Ram Krishan, President and General Secretary respectively of the now dissolved Hindu Sabha, which was an influential political party before 1947. It was formally adopted at a convention of workers of the National Conference of Jammu district who met at Parmandal in March, 1949. It in fact demanded abolition of the institution of monarchy and sense of direct participation by the people of Jammu in a democratic set up.

A deputation led by the present writer waited on the Prime Minister Nehru with the demands of the Jammu convention. It stressed that the institution of monarchy had become anachronistic in the new context. It was only a source of tension between the two regions and also proved a broken reed for the people of Jammu. As a constitutional head, he could not provide political leadership to the region; whereas his presence would inhibit growth of any other leadership. What Jammu needed was not a psychological illusion of sharing power but tangible constitutional and institutional arrangement for the purpose.

Nehru appreciated this line of reasoning. He was also aware of the anomaly of situation. But he averred that "Abdullah-Hari Singh cart" still represented a sort of what he called a stable instability. He cautioned restraint in upsetting it.

Union Minister Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, who used to deal with Kashmir affairs, was equally keen to know the reaction of Jammu. Being the former Prime Minister of the State he personally knew the standing of the signatories of the demand of abdication. He was pleasantly surprised to note that the issue was no more communal or regional.

It is difficult to measure the contribution of the Jammu group in influencing the decision of the Government of India to persuade Maharaja Hari Singh to abdicate on 25 May 1949 in favour of his son Karan Singh, who became the Regent of the State. For there were other weighty reasons also. The Prime Minister had indicated that the Maharaja was a liability in winning international support for the Kashmir issue pending in

the Security Council and in winning plebiscite in Kashmir, to which India was committed at that time.

On 9 July 1949, the Maharaja proclaimed, through an official gazette, his decision to leave the State for a temporary period "for reasons of health" and directed and declared that "all powers and functions, whether legislative, executive or judicial" which were exercisable by him in relation to the State and its government "shall during the period of my absence from the State be exercisable by Yuvraj Shri Karan Singh ji Bahadur".

Another Instrument of Domination

Karan Singh sought the advice of the leaders of Jammu before accepting the new position. We told him that as constitutional head he would only prove an added instrument of the domination of Kashmiri leadership over Jammu. If he really wanted to serve the people of his region, we pleaded, he should enter public life and provide leadership to the people. He did not contest the argument but said that he could not afford to displease Nehru on whom his career depended.

Maharaja's removal from the scene was followed by dismissal of the leadership of the Jammu National Conference which had demanded his abdication and insisted on an equitable share of the region in political power. In fact, repeated changes in the office bearers of the Jammu National Conference had completely paralysed the party in the region. No constitutional, institutional and political arrangement or conventions were devised to fill in the vacuum created by the abdication of the Maharaja.

Instead of trying to come to terms with any political group of Jammu and share power with it, Kashmiri leadership of National Conference preferred to use the name of Karan Singh, the Regent of the State, to get the support of the people of Jammu. But the statements on his behalf in favour of National Conference and its government did not cut much ice. For apart from the constitutional impropriety of involving a head of the State in political controversy, the fact that the young Prince had allowed himself to be used by the "enemies" of his father for the sake of office did not endear him with to people of

the region.

Inequitable Power Structure

In no case abdication of the Maharaja was followed by a larger share of the people of Jammu in political power of the State. While numerical superiority of the Valley over Jammu was nominal (about 53 per cent and 45 per cent respectively), the latter's share in the new power structure was nominal. In a cabinet of five, four ministers including the Deputy Prime Minister belonged to the Valley. Top leadership of the ruling National Conference including its President, Vice-president, General Secretary and the Treasurer also were from the same region.

Aside from the nominal representation of Jammu in the power structure of the State, Sheikh Abdullah did not seem to have mentally accepted the new role of a leadership of the entire State—a role that was thrust upon him by circumstances. He generally spoke of Kashmir and Jammu as we and they respectively.

While condemning the "communalists of Jammu"—the reference often implied that communalism and Jammu were synonymous—Sheikh Abdullah said, at Srinagar on 15 August, 1949 : "If the people sincerely desire to separate and establish an independent Dogra Desh, I would say with full authority *On behalf of Kashmiris* that they would not at all mind this separation." (Italics added)

Who demanded an independent Dogra Desh and how representative was such a demand of Jammu people ? Apart from such questions, the statement implied that the Sheikh did not consider himself to be a leader of Jammu. If a leader with such an attitude did not find suitable persons in Jammu worth his trust with whom he could share power, it was bound to lead to his alienation from the region.

Regional Leadership

But why did the dominant Kashmiri leaders of National Conference not allow growth of leadership in Jammu ? Why were not orgnisational elections held or not held in fair manner ? Why were not even those leaders tolerated whom the Kashmiri

leaders had imposed on Jammu by nominations or the facade of elections ? Why was local leadership repeatedly replaced ? Asking these questions in March 1950, I made a public offer to the Sheikh, in case he was unwilling to permit the evolution of a local leadership in Jammu democratically as he did not trust its people, to "nominate a leader from Jammu who should be consulted for Jammu affairs and should have as high a status as any Kashmiri leader (other than him)". I further offered on behalf of my colleagues to rally people of the region around such leader.

This was certainly not a democratic way. But under the prevailing undemocratic system and in those critical days when Sheikh Abdullah's leadership of the State was considered indispensable for the national interest and for the integrity of the State, this seemed to be the most feasible way to defend the self-interest and honour of Jammu and maintain its cordiality with the region of Kashmir.

The campaign for regional identity and regional leadership culminated in the revival of the Provincial Committee of the National Conference, headed by Sardar Budh Singh. The veteran Jammu leader had pioneered the freedom movement in the State long before National Conference and its predecessor Muslim Conference were born. He had twice been elected president of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. Abdullah used to call him his spiritual father.

It was hoped that with these qualifications he could bridge the distance between Kashmiri leadership and the people of Jammu. But having been the staunchest champion of Kashmiri aspirations throughout his long life, he was deeply hurt and frustrated when Abdullah accused him of being a Jammu regionalist. He was soon shunted out to the Rajya Sabha and made ineffective in Jammu politics ; leaving behind an unfilled vacuum.

Enlarged Vacuum

Reluctance of national parties—in particular the secular parties—to extend their activities to the State only enlarged the sense of vacuum. As Sheikh Abdullah was supposed to be fighting the battle of secularism and national interest in

Kashmir, all parties that styled themselves as secular lent support to him and his party. All India Congress Committee, for instance, disbanded its Jammu unit after National Conference took over the administration. Communists tried to infiltrate into the ruling party. And Socialist Party leader Jayaprakash Narayan, when approached by the present writer, advised "not to set up a party unit in the State till the Kashmir issue was resolved."

IV

Regional Collision

As a unified and composite leadership of the whole State could not grow, the dominant urges of its two principal regions started diverging. Conversely, the divergence in their urges also inhibited growth of a common leadership of the State.

The foremost factor that influenced these urges, soon after the independence, was the sword of uncertainty hanging over the heads of the people of the State, as the Government of India had made a commitment, which was reiterated at international forums like the Security Council, to decide the future of the State by a plebiscite.

For the majority community of Jammu, the idea of becoming a part of Pakistan was simply unthinkable in view of the fate of Hindus and Sikhs in that country. Though the Maharaja had aspired for independence of the State, before acceeding to the Indian Union, and had, in a letter to Sardar Patel dated 31 January, 1948, threatened to withdraw accession and seek better terms from Pakistan, the Hindus of Jammu could hardly be enthused for any alternative other than accession to India. The experience of an "independent State" between 15 August 1947 and 26th October 1947 was too harrowing to inspire confidence.

Equivocations of Kashmiri leaders

The sense of uncertainty had, on the other hand, created room for equivocation in the Valley. The choice of India and Pakistan for the Muslim community was, after all, not that of life and death as it seemed to Hindus. Moreover, an independent status was still not without its charm for it.

The Kashmiri leadership, under its compulsions and past commitments, attached more importance to gaining full freedom from autocratic rule and economic reforms than to the issue of accession. In fact they had to justify accession of the State to India in terms of the former objectives. They also continued to emphasize the right of self-determination and the distinct entity of Kashmir, which, according to them was threatened by Pakistan and defended by India. This was the only possible way for them to neutralize the influence of the religious appeal of Pakistan on the Muslims of Kashmir. While Nehru "entirely agreed with this" (keeping people away from the influence of Pakistan, he conceded that "Sheikh Abdullah is not a clear thinker and he goes astray in his speeches as many of our politicians (do)."

Unmindful of outside reactions in the rest of the country, Abdullah and his colleagues remained more concerned with the response of their people whose support they had to ensure in a possible plebiscite. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the then Deputy Prime Minister of the State, for instance, said that accession was of secondary importance and that political and economic freedom must take precedence. G. M. Sadiq, another senior colleague of the Sheikh, was more ambivalent when he said that whichever dominion helped the cause of *New Kashmir*, the National Conference manifesto, "we would affiliate with that". But a much greater furore was caused by Abdullah's reported statement to Michael Davidson of *Scotsman* on 14 April 1949 to the effect that "independent Kashmir guaranteed by the UN may be the only solution." The United Press of America quoted him as having pleaded for independent Kashmir "with the consent and support of the whole world; including India and Pakistan." A similar statement was published in *Observer* London in which he proposed that defence of an independent Kashmir be taken over by the UNO. Poonch, the statement added, should go to the "Azad Kashmir" (Pak held part of the State) if it liked. Later Abdullah retracted from these statements reportedly under pressure from the Government of India and clarified that he was merely "thinking aloud". He also admitted that it was wrong to equate India and Pakistan.

Chain Reaction

Such statements irrespective of their context and compulsions, and the spectre of plebiscite scared the people in Jammu and Ladakh. The fear of a possible pro-Pakistan verdict of plebiscite and equivocations of Kashmiri leaders on the issue of accession of the State made some of them receptive to the ideas of division of the State and zonal plebiscite.

These ideas, implying lack of faith in leaders of Kashmir, further provoked them. Referring to the demand of Jammu Praja Parishad for zonal plebiscite, Abdullah said on 17 March 1949, that it was "an insult to the principles for which Mahatma Gandhi laid down his life and had made our fight against Pakistan futile."

The demand of zonal plebiscite not only smacked of distrust in Kashmiri leaders and the Government of India but also in Muslims of Kashmir and was likely to encourage them to think of alternatives other than remaining a part of India. For this reason it was disowned and condemned by the non-Praja Parishad leadership of Jammu.

But Abdullah and his Kashmiri colleagues continued to equate Parishad with Jammu and condemn the latter for the sins of the former. Protesting against such moves at character assassination of the personality of Jammu, I said in a press statement on 1 October 1949: "The attempts to humiliate Jammu by characterising it as a citadel of reaction and communalism are extremely reprehensible and absurd".

The way National Conference was paralysed by its own leadership and circumstances were created for the growth of Praja Parishad in Hindu areas of Jammu created the suspicion that this madness was not without a method. For the Parishad provided an excellent alibi for the separatist elements of the Valley.

Parishad Thrust on Jammu

The following brief story of the rise of Parishad, summarized from my article in the bi-monthly *Kashmir Affairs* (January-February 1960) might be relevant in this context:

There is much truth in the statement that Praja Parishad was thrust upon Jammu and its present leadership on it.

For Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, whose leadership adds prestige to the party, did not join it till 1949. His offer, from jail after his first imprisonment in 1948, to give up active politics and lead a retired life, was not accepted. But he was released following a minor agitation, in which two or three scores of persons were arrested. This gave the initial encouragement and prestige to the Parishad. A year later the leaders were again arrested. The agitation for their release also fizzled out and the Parishad president Roop Chand Nanda tendered a written apology. While the pleas of the local National Conference leaders for the release of the rest of the detenus was rejected, they were released, with greater prestige, on the intervention of the Jana Sangh leader Mauli Chander Sharma. The third occasion for agitation was the hoisting of the party flag of National Conference at the Jammu College building to which some students had taken objection. Vindinctive punishment to the students and provocative actions of the police created a situation in which the Government found a justification for arresting prominent leaders of the Parishad who were, this time, released on the reported intervention of the then Union Minister without portfolio Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar. On all these occasions the arrests were made without any apparent cause. But if the conscious objective of the ruling party was to build up a separate organisation of Hindus of Jammu, the pattern of arrests and releases could not have been better planned.

This was a time when the Communists, who were well entrenched in the politics of the State, also aspired for an independent status of Kashmir Valley and its isolation from Jammu and the rest of the country. Explicit and categoric reference to this stand in the literature of the CPI and of the international Communist movement have been documented in my book *Communism in Kashmir*. It was a period when the party was engaged in struggles for the right of self-determination of the "nationalities" of India. While the CPI had formerly allied with the national bourgeoise against the foreign rule, observe Overstreet and Windmiller in their monumental work on

Communism in India, it now must ally with provincial bourgeoise against the central rule. The Communist Parliamentary Party leader Comrade P. Sumderayye had told the present writer that the attempts of Kashmiri chauvinists to overthrow Indian domination served a progressive cause.

The crucial role of the Communists in Jammu politics was described by the correspondent of the *Hindustan Times* thus: "National Conference has abdicated in favour of the Communists whose bread is buttered by official patronage and whose nest is feathered by dissidents. Thus the entire space between the regime and Praja Parishad is allowed to be tenanted by the Reds."

Unwilling Allies

How diverse forces were working for the same objective was explained by the present writer in a written memorandum to the Union Minister Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar on 14 May 1949. A UPI report about it carried by the press stated as follows:

> The memorandum alleged that there were certain forces within and outside the State which deliberately wanted Kashmir's isolation from the rest of India to serve their own (respective) political ends. While the RSS, it stated wanted exclusion of the Muslim and nationalist section from India so that the secular basis of the country might be challenged, the communists were out to make capital of this and were planning secretly and openly for an "Independent Kashmir" to make it a base for Russian influence to penetrate into India. The reactionary and defeatist elements of India, again, declared the game of Kashmir as lost and wanted India to take its hands off from there.

The idea of zonal plebiscite or division of the State, openly propagated by Praja Parishad, was reflected in the report of Sir Owen Dixon, the U. N. mediator on Kashmir, submitted to the Security Council on 19 September 1950. He suggested "some method of allocating the Kashmir Valley" and partition of the rest of the areas between India and Pakistan on the basis of known sentiments of their inhabitants, keeping in view the importance of geographical features in fixing international

frontier."

Balraj Madhok, the mentor of Praja Parishad and later the Jana Sangh Chief Expert on Kashmir welcomed the Dixon proposals as "eminently reasonable and practical". The distinct personality of Kashmir region implied in these proposals also pleased many Kashmiri nationalists. B. N. Mullick, the former Director of the Intelligence Bureau, reports in his book *My Years with Nehru*, that "Sir Owen Dixon was greatly influenced by another Australian Dr Edmund, the Principal of the CMS Mission School (Srinagar) and a close confidant of Sheikh Abdullah and it was suspected that these proposals had the latter's tacit approval."

It has now been revealed, according to the disclosures made in the declassified papers of the State Dep. rtment of the United States that her ambassador in India Loy Henderson had a secret meeting with him in September 1950 when the Sheikh had sought American support for the independence of Kashmir.

From that time to May 1953, the Sheikh seemed to have managed to evoke sympathetic interest in independent Kashmir by the United States as well Soviet Union till the game of the former was exposed when the CPI—as also Soviet Union—staged a volte-face and withdrew their support from the Sheikh and the idea of independent Kashmir.

Jammu became a pawn in the international game in the State. And Praja Parishad remained the most effective instru ment in promoting separatist trends in Kashmir. It provided a much needed alibi—most probably unwillingly—to Abdullah in retracing his commitments for the State's accession to India.

Jana Sangh—the parent body of the Parishad—came to a more explicit agreement with Abdullah when its founder president Dr Shyama Prasad Mukerjee declared at the inaugural session of the party in December, 1952 "we would readily agree to treat the Valley with Sheikh Abdullah as its head in any special manner and for such time as he would like, but Jammu and Ladakh must be integrated with India according to the wishes of the people."

Abdullah was quick to oblige by saying that "if any region wished to break away, the Government would not attempt to retain it by force."

Aside this tacit understanding on their objectives, Abdullah and Praja Parishad collaborated far more effectively through their apparent clash. For it was this clash that caused a vicious circle of chain reaction between the aggressive urges of Kashmiri Muslims and Jammu Hindus which the two respectively represented. They got reinforcement from each other.

While Sheikh Abdullah and Government of India patched up most of their differences on relations of the State with the Centre and concluded what was called Delhi Agreement on the subject in July 1952, Praja Parishad opposed it and launched a massive agitation in November 1952 when the State Government started implementing some of its provisions.

Under the Agreement, Abdullah agreed to cede a few more subjects to the Centre than were contemplated in the original Instrument of Accession. The State accepted the national flag, limited jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution. But it retained its right to frame a separate internal constitution.

Articulation of Jammu's Discontent

The Parishad articulated Jammu's discontent in the emotive slogan of "full accession" of the State to the Indian Union and abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution that guaranteed it a special status. The motivating idea behind this demand was that the transfer of power from the State to the Centre would reduce the capacity of Kashmiri leaders to dominate over Jammu. The newly formed Bharatiya Jana Sangh, in collaboration with the Hindu Maha Sabha and Ram Rajya Parishad, started a massive campaign outside the State in favour of the Parishad demand.

However, by confusing concepts of accession and integration the Jana Sangh-Parishad agitation made the former also a subject of controversy. Otherwise as Nehru said "the accession of the State was complete when it first acceded in 1947." The agitation, above all, hit at the most sensitive part of the Kashmiri mind as it tended to threaten the autonomy and identity of Kashmir which had survived the armed attack of its co-religionists in Pakistan and which Indian leaders had pledged to preserve.

The former Director of the Intelligence Bureau B.N. Mullick quotes Nehru, in his book *My Years with Nehru* as having said that the Jana Sangh agitation had given him a shock and that for the first time he had started feeling doubtful about the future of Kashmir. Nehru also warned Jana Sangh President Dr Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, in a letter dated 12 February, 1953 against "the effect of the agitation not only on those hostile to us but also in other countries and more especially on the conversations taking place in Geneva" with the U. N. representative Dr Frank Graham and the representative of Pakistan. He had "not a shadow of doubt" that "the communal agitation" of the Parishad, "supported by communal and narrow-minded elements in India" would "bring disaster in its train not only for Jammu and Kashmir but also to the larger interests of India" (letter to Mukerjee on 5 February 1953).

Angry Reactions

In a series of statements, Abdullah gave sharp expression to the angry reaction of Kashmiris to the demand of "full accession." Referring to "unrealistic, childish and insane" arguments for full application of the Indian Constitution to the State, he said at Ranbirsingh Pura on 10 April 1952: "we have acceded to India in regards to defence, foreign affairs and communications in order to ensure a sort of internal autonomy.....If our right to shape our own destiny is challenged and if there is resurgence of communalism in India, how are we to convince the Muslims of Kashmir that India does not intend to swallow up Kashmir.....Such developments might lead to break in the accession of Kashmir to India."

In another speech at Srinagar on 18 April 1952 he reiterated:—

> Those who are raising the slogan of full application of the Indian Constitution to Kashmir are weakening the accession. They are the people who had massacred Muslims in Jammu. The slogan is natural to cause suspicion in the minds of Muslims in the State.

Speaking at a public meeting in Srinagar on 13 July, 1953 he said that "the support given to the Parishad agitation by

India amounted to violation of mutual agreements."

In his reactions the Sheikh clearly overshot the mark which, in turn, provoked further hostility and caused fresh misgivings against him in Jammu and the rest of the country. The Kashmiri leader and Praja Parishad influenced as well as were influenced by each other's utterances. Thus while the Sheikh justified his shifting stand on the accession issue by the agitation in Jammu and the stand of Jana Sangh, the latter derived its rationale from the shifting stand of the Sheikh.

Jana Sangh Climb Down

There are indications that Mukerjee had become aware of the dangerous implications of the Parishad agitation. In a dramatic climb down, he agreed to give up all his demands. Writing to the Prime Minister on 17 February 1953, he offered to support unity of the State, Article 370 and all the terms of the Nehru-Abdullah agreement of July 1952, including autonomy of the State within India and of regions within the State. He, however, wanted an honourable settlement which included release of all Parishad Satyagrahis and talks between its leaders and the Government.

Nehru seemed unwilling to do anything that could provide a face-saving device to the Parishad and add to its prestige; thereby further alienating the people of Kashmir. Hence he refused to start a dialogue with it. However, after the unfortunate death of Mukerjee in Kashmir jail, the then Director of the IB, Mullick claims to have taken the initiative in persuading Praja Parishad to withdraw its agitation in view of the harm it was doing to national interest. It was wound up without achieving its avowed objective of abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. But before that it had caused predictable reactions in the Valley.

While Nehru expressed his satisfaction over the end of the agitation in Jammu, Abdullah was far from satisfied. For he said "though the Parishad agitation has ceased, the conflict of ideals and interests created by it remains. The demand for the merger of the State with India is still there. And so long as these aims exist the sword will hang over the basic relationship between India and Kashmir."

He told a National Conference rally on 25 July 1953:

> The confidence created by National Conference in the people here (in accession to India) has been shaken by Jana Sangh and other communal organisations in India.

In order to rescue the situation, Union Minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad assured Sheikh Abdullah in a letter dated 9 July 1953 that the Government of India was willing to "declare that the special status of Kashmir will be made permanent and that the Govt. of India will be bound by it without any pre-conditions."

In his reply to Azad dated 16 July 1953, the Sheikh felt that the declaration was too late and too inadequate "to dispel the fears that had arisen in the minds of the people of Kashmir." He said: "a big party in India still forcefully demands merger of the State with India. In the State itself Praja Parishad is threatening to resort to direct action—if the demand for State's complete merger with India is not conceded."

Divergence on Federal Ties

Thus the popular urges of the two principal regions of the State which their leaders articulated in a mutually irreconcilable stand on Centre-State relations eventually led to Centre-State collision, culminating in the crisis of 9 August 1953 when Abdullah was deposed and arrested.

While defending the action against Abdullah, Nehru securely held Praja Parishad responsible for creating complications in the delicate relations of Kashmir with the rest of India. Speaking in House of People on 10 August, he observed "the unfortunate agitation (i.e. of Praja Parishad) had sought to undermine this basic position and had created not only confusion but also powerful reaction especially in the Valley of Kashmir."

Abdullah's successor, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad denounced his predecessor for deviating from the settled policies of National Conference and repudiating its past programmes and policies. But like Nehru, he also regarded the Parishad agitation to be "highly detrimental to the interest of the country and misleading in terms of its political repercussions."

Nehru and Bakshi rightly held Abdullah and the Parishad to be the joint architects of the crisis of August 1953. One could not have played one's part without the aid of the other. There were certainly other factors that facilitated their role. But without the involvement of the principal agents, catalytics would have hardly mattered.

It is difficult to discover any positive results of the Parishad agitation. Its failure to achieve anything tangible demoralised the people of Jammu to such an extent that they could not revolt against their humiliating existence—for another 25 years. It split the personality of Jammu on communal lines which further undermined the role of the region in the politics of the State. Finally, the fact that the Praja Parishad leader who joined Jana Sangh which, in turn, merged itself into Janata Party in 1977, formally reconciled to the continuance of Article 370 shows that the emotions, tune, energy and resources of so many people invested in the campaign for its abrogation yielded only negative dividends. As I argued in an article in *Indian Express* : "Those who agitated for abrogation of Article 370 from 1953 to 1975, and those who considered assurances of the Government of India for its retention as inadequate, have both wasted 22 precious years of their life as also of the State and the country" (16 June 1967).

Divergence in the dominant urges of the two regions of the State on the question of Article 370 and the resultant crisis of 1953 marked complete alienation of Kashmiri Muslims from the rest of India which tempted many agents, infiltrators, saboteurs and a full scale armed attack from Pakistan. Moreoverthe prolonged detention without trial of Abdullah became the most glaring blot on Indian democracy. As he had never given any indication of prefering Pakistan to India, an understanding with him was indispensable for making Kashmir a willing part of India. To this patriotic end, a band of conscientious Indians—from Jayaprakash Narayan to the present writer—dedicated themselves in the following years till an accord was reached between the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah on the solution of what was called the Kashmir problem. Reconciliation of divergent regional aspirations was a vital part of these mediational efforts.

V

Regional Autonomy

Jammu's regional discontent also branched off into a demand for regional autonomy. Though the campaign for it was carried simultaneously with that for abrogation of Article 370, they widely differed in their basic concept, ideological origin, historical background and leadership.

The lineage of "complete merger" movement can be traced to the demand for an independent Hindu State of Jammu and Kashmir before independence and for zonal plebiscite thereafter. It had clearly an anti-Kashmiri and anti-Muslim slant. It drew its inspiration and support from parties like Jana Sangh, Hindu Maha Sabha and Ram Rajya Parishad. Praja Parishad, which spearheaded the movement in Jammu merged itself into Bharatiya Jana Sangh in December 1963. The movement was negative in character in the sense that it was more concerned with suppressing Kashmiri urges for greater autonomy than for getting similar safeguards for Jammu in the mistaken belief that transfer of power from the State Government to Delhi would reduce the capacity of dominant Kashmiri leadership to dominate over Jammu.

The proponents of regional autonomy, on the other hand, drew their inspiration from and had participated in the freedom movement in the State which was directed against the authoritarian rule of the Maharaja and supported by the Indian National Congress. They opposed the concept of an independent Hindu State and demanded accession of the State to the Indian Union under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah in 1947, thereafter they demanded equitable share in political power for the

people of all the three regions. For achieving this objective, they believed, abolition of monarchy and a secular democratic organisation were indispensable. They drew their ideological inspiration mainly from the Indian Socialist movement. Their movement had a more positive content in the sense that they asserted the rights of their own region without disowning legitimate urges of the Kashmiri region. They opposed suppression of Kashmiri urges by the ruler before 1947 and the Government of India after 1953. They thus aspired for a more rational and a common emotional basis for the integrity of the State.

National Conference Framework

In its earlier phase, the demand for recognition of Jammu's regional identity, regional leadership and its equitable share in the power structure of the State was made within the framework of the ruling National Conference. But after the expulsion of Om Prakash Saraf from the party, ostensibly for organising "deliverance day" on the abdication of the Maharaja in May 1949 and later suspension for over a year of the Jammu City National Conference of which I was the working president as also the undemocratic and arbitrary manner in which the party was run in the region, it became increasingly difficult for the group to function through National Conference.

However, an active role had also been played by Jammu and Kashmir Youth Conference and Friends of New Kashmir, Delhi in articulation of Jammu's regional urges on secular lines. The objectives of the former, formed in May 1948, included to "organise the people of Jammu on democratic and progressive lines so that the political power got from the autocratic ruler may be transferred to the people of Jammu" and to "fight for the solidarity and integrity of Jammu and Kashmir".

From 1949 to 1953 I had several meetings with the Prime Minister Nehru in which I opposed Praja Parishad demand for zonal plebiscite or division of the State, supported abolition of monarchy, land reforms of the State in the fifties and Article 370 when it was incorporated in the Constitution of India. I simultaneously urged appreciation of secular character of Jammu's urges and need for constitutional and institutional

arrangements for ensuring Jammu's rights.

In my meeting with Nehru on 14 April 1952, I reminded him, in a written note, that "the greatest internal problem of the State is to maintain cordial relation between its constituent units." I strongly objected to wholesale condemnation of the people of Jammu as communalists. While supporting the right of Kashmiri leaders to claim a special status for the State within India, I demanded similar status for the constituent units within the State.

When the constitutional status of the State within India was discussed by Kashmiri leaders and the Government of India in 1952, I again pressed the claim of recognition of Jammu's status within the State. In my meeting with Nehru on 15 July 1952, on the eve of finalisation of an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and the Government of India on Centre-State relations called the Delhi Agreement, I submitted, in a written memorandum as follows:

> Kashmiri leadership has not been able to come out of the orbit of narrow local nationalism of the Valley and extend its influence to other parts of the State, despite whole-hearted support of the progressive elements of these regions (particularly Jammu). We apprehend growing deterioration of the internal relations between different regions particularly when the policies of the Kashmiri leaders are encouraging communal and reactionary activities of Praja Parishad in Jammu which also banks upon similar regional nationalism.

Apart from reiterating the demand of regional autonomy the memorandum suggested that "during the current talks with Kashmiri leaders emphasis should be laid on democratisation of the political structure of the State, safeguarding rights of the people, ensuring freedom of judiciary, making administration completely neutral as regards political activities and distinctively separate from National Conference and economic amelioration of the people through a planned economic policy."

Nehru-Abdullah Commitment

Happily the demand of regional autonomy received positive

response from Nehru and the Sheikh. Releasing the Delhi Agreement, Nehru told a press conference in New Delhi on 24 July 1952, in the presence of the Sheikh, that "the State Government was considering regional autonomies within the larger State." Separately the Sheikh gave an assurance to the effect that "the constitution of the State, when complete would give limited regional autonomy, particularly in cultural spheres, to Jammu and Ladakh".

In essence, the underlying principle of the Delhi Agreement was autonomy of the State within India and autonomy of the regions within the State.

Unhappily, however, the agreement was strongly opposed by leaders like Shyamaprasad Mukerjee and N.C. Chatterjee and their ideological protege Jammu Praja Parishad which started an agitation against its implementation and for what it called full accession in November 1952.

Realising the possible dangerous implications of the agitation, I and my colleagues stepped up our campaign, for regional autonomy as a way out for solution of the Jammu problem, through press and platform, within and outside the State.

Discussing the situation in Jammu, daily *Hind Samachar* (Jullundur) of 25 December 1952 editorially commented: "In this connection Mr Balraj Puri, who feels concerned over the Jammu agitation, has formulated a proposal that suggests internal autonomy for the three regions of the State, namely Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Though it is little complicated, it deserves consideration. For no other solution is in sight."

A similar observation was made by *Tribune* of Punjab. In its editorial of 11 February 1953, it observed: "As Sheikh Abdullah is entitled to demand from us that we should fully appreciate his position in regard to accession (with autonomous status for the State), similarly the people of Jammu are entitled to demand that Sheikh Abdullah should appreciate their point of view. The people of Jammu must be given certain assurances. They must be assured of genuine autonomy."

Perturbed over the possible consequences of the Praja Parishad agitation I again sought the intervention of Nehru on

6 January 1953. In that meeting I submitted my assessment of the situation as follows:

> The unhappy situation in Jammu is mostly due to the local nationalism of the various regions of the State taking an aggressive form. We regret that even Sheikh Abdullah remained essentially a hero of Kashmiri nationalism and could not reconcile himself to the role of the leadership of the State.....

We are not very clear about the real motives of the Kashmiri leadership regarding their Jammu policy. But we feel circumstances were often created which deliberately encouraged Praja Parishad at our cost. We suggest political and constitutional changes to remove the present unrest..... Conditions must be created so that the people of Jammu may feel that they are free from the so-called Kashmiri domination. An announcement for granting some sort of autonomy to each region would considerably ease the situation. It is the logical end of what is being called "limited accession".....We emphasize that the integrity of the State be maintained and feel that autonomy to each region would act as a unifying force between the peoples of all the regions.

Jana Sangh Support

Fortunately, Jana Sangh President Dr Shyamaprasad Mukerjee also veered round to this view. In a letter to Prime Minister Nehru on 17 February 1953, he offered to withdraw the Parishad agitation and accept the Delhi Agreement, unity of the State and the principle of autonomy which would "apply to the province of Jammu as a whole and of course also to Ladakh and Kashmir Valley."

While Nehru refused to start any dialogue with the Parishad even on his own terms, Sheikh Abdullah, without making any direct reference to the changed stand of the Jana Sangh leader and his offer for negotiations, reiterated the decision of his government to "give autonomy to the different cultural units of the State as will be provided in the Constitution that is being drawn up." Broadcasting from Radio Kashmir, Srinagar, on 17 April 1953, he said : "This will remove all the fears of domination of one unit over the other and will make

for the voluntary unity and consolidation of the people of the State."

Nehru made a similar announcement on 2 July 1953. According to a PTI report circulated on that day, the Prime Minister said "the State Government was considering grant of autonomy to its regions, particularly Jammu, while framing the Constitution of the State." On the following day, the then Deputy Prime Minister of the State Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, said, in a press statement, that Nehru's announcement reflected the policy of the State government. He added, "Sheikh Abdullah has consented to the proposed scheme of autonomy for the constituent units of the State so as to ensure its unity."

Durga Dass Verma, the then General Secretary of Praja Parishad and the dictator of the agitation, confirms that a 45-page draft proposal on regional autonomy was passed on to him by the State Government. After its approval by the party, it decided to withdraw the agitation.

Referring to inter-regional relations, Bakshi, who succeeded the Sheikh, observed in a Radio broadcast from Srinagar on 9 August 1953, that "the rights and privileges that we secure for the State as a whole have to be shared in equal measure by the people of its different parts." He further added, "a genuinely democratic set up has to satisfy the demands of each one of the constituent units of the State with due regard to its basic unity and integrity."

A sub-committee of the State Constituent Assembly, consisting of Messrs D.P. Dhar, Syed Mir Qasim and G.L. Dogra, recommended a substantial measure of autonomy for each region with power of taxation and legislation.

Abdullah's Arrest

However, the dramatic developments leading to removal from power and arrest of Abdullah on 9 August 1953 had so dazzled the people and created such euphoria among the ranks of the Parishad that it could never mobilise them for getting the assurances given by Governments of the State and India regarding Jammu's status implemented.

Among the groups that remained active for the demand of

regional autonomy was that of the Socialists. They had left National Conference following Sheikh Abdullah's refusal to implement his commitment in this regard and make National Conference an instrument to campaign for it.

They first organised themselves as the Democratic Socialist Party and declared that the Party stood for the integrity of Jammu and Kashmir State on the principle that different regions of the State get internal autonomy and districts, tehsils, cities and villages get maximum powers in local matters. Later the party along with other Sccialist groups became the State branch of Praja Socialist Party. In its first Conference in November 1954, inaugurated by Asoka Mehta and presided over by Om Prakash Saraf, the party resolved to support autonomy of the State within India and added: "in view of peculiar historical, cultural and geographical factors and to improve inter-regional cordiality, some powers should also be decentralized on the basis of regional autonomy without which integrity of the State cannot be maintained, nor can the peculiar cultural, linguistic and other local interests be safeguarded."

Reiterating the demand in my manifesto for the State assembly elections in 1963, which I contested, I said : "Jammu needs safeguards within the State on precisely the same grounds on which Kashmiris feel its need within Indian Union."

Explaining the causes of Jammu's discontent, the manifesto observed :

> Lack of adequate share in political power is the most important basic problem of Jammu. On getting its share in power Jammu's poverty might become less bearable. But without power and freedom, even prosperity cannot keep it happy. When the democratic and progressive forces of Jammu were engaged in a struggle against the system of monarchy, their objective was not merely transfer of power from the Maharaja to Kashmiri leaders but also to get it shared by the people of Jammu. The transfer of power from a Dogra ruler, however autocratic, to a Kashmiri leader, however popular, could not be a source of psychological satisfaction to the people of Jammu unless it was shared with them.

As G.M. Sadiq became Prime Minister (later called Chief Minister) of the State in March 1964, hopes were revived for implementation of the idea of regional autonomy. For before coming to power, he had often made sympathetic references to the aspirations of Jammu.

Karan Singh Formula

However, he was soon involved in a bitter controversy with the then Governor of the State, Dr. Karan Singh, who, in a statement to *Times*, London in November 1965, had proposed linguistic re-organisation of the State and merger of Jammu with the adjoining Himachal Pradesh. Sadiq called it "an imported idea which was fraught with dangerous consequences" and should be resisted with "all our might".

Hindustan Times of 22 August 1967 reported "Mr Balraj Puri at the present the most active advocate of the autonomy move had a series of meetings with Mr Sadiq and Dr Karan Singh." In these meetings I urged them to consider the idea of regional autonomy as a via media to bridge their differences. Both responded to my suggestion and I did some exercises with them to work out the details of the idea. As a part of our preliminary agreement Sadiq agreed to publicly take cognizance of the regional problem. Speaking in the State assembly on 12 March 1968, *Hindustan Times* report continues "he frankly admitted the tensions existing between the two regions of Jammu and Kashmir and stressed the need to find out a way to resolve them. He also warned against throwing the problem under the carpet."

Taking formal cognizance of the problem, J & K Pradesh Congress Committee appointed a five member committee, with Sadiq as Chairman and Messrs Syed Mir Qasim, Shamsuddin, Bhagat Chhaju Ram and Trilochan Dutt as members to look into the grievances of Jammu. According to *Hindustan Times* "people are more interested in securing a fair deal for Jammu but feel that this cannot be done without Kashmiri people parting with some of their present authority in favour of the people of Jammu through an amendment of the State Constitution."

After the assembly election of 1967, when Sadiq returned to

power with a legislative party of his choice, his attitude hardened. He, his party and government launched a massive attack on the movement of regional autonomy. Other parties also joined the attack; more on my motives, person and patriotism than on my ideas. These included PSP, the national executive of which abruptly disowned its own part on the subject, CPI, local National Conference, political wing of Anand Marg and a number of ad hoc organisations—"strange bed fellows" as *Hindustan Times* described them. An EKTA Front was set up to coordinate the concerted anti-autonomy campaign.

Hindustan Times correspondent adds :

> The strength of the move for autonomy for Jammu is indicated not so much by what its protagonists have been able to achieve so far as by the amount of resistance it has aroused. Diverse elements have combined to oppose it tooth and nail. They include ruling Congressmen as well as Jana Sangh, the most vocal opposition in the Jammu area. The move constitutes a real threat to their existence if not to the integrity of the State as alleged by them.

In an article in *Indian Express* of 17 August 1967, I further described the heat generated by the controversy as follows :

> The Pradesh Congress Executive condemned it (regional autonomy) as a disruptionist slogan. The All India Jana Sangh Working Committee at its meeting at Simla on 2 July strongly denounced any move to grant regional autonomy to Jammu. For "it would benefit only the supporters of Sheikh Abdullah and pro-Pakistan elements."

Pradesh Congress saw a foreign hand behind such a move. The Jana Sangh echoed the charge and alleged that the conspiracy was hatched at Tashkent. Others freely mentioned Russia, America, China and Pakistan as inspirer of the move.

At a less responsible level, no holds were barred. Through posters, loudspeakers and public speeches, wild attacks were made on the sponsors of the autonomy idea. Rarely in the history of the State, in Jammu at any rate, had witch hunting acquired such a feverish pitch.

Three years later Sadiq confessed to me that I was hit below the belt. But he tried to shift the blame on his colleague D. P. Dhar who, he alleged, master—minded the

operations with resources of the Field Survey Organisation and other government departments.

Autonomy Campaign

The fierce controversy on the issue of regional autonomy was touched off by the release of my book *Jammu—A Clue to Kashmir Tangle*, a collection of my writings on the subject of Jammu's status within the State from 1947 to 1966. On 18 April 1967 I addressed a crowded meeting at the Gulab Bhawan Jammu; which was exclusively devoted to elaboration of the demand for regional autonomy. I said:

> The idea of regional autonomy rested on principles accepted all over the country. It was one of the basic principles of a federal and democratic country like India that each distinct cultural entity should be recognised and provided with opportunities of full growth. Even in unbilingual states, safeguards had been provided for each region within it. The basic principle had been implemented either through linguistic re-organisation of states or regional committees or sub-legislatures. The latest experiment was in Assam (where hill areas were granted autonomy within the State).

I was convinced, I added, that Jammu's autonomy served the best interests of Kashmir and that of the whole country. Had it been merely a question of Jammu's interest, I said, I would not have devoted so great a part of my public life for this cause.

The stand taken by me was endorsed by 180 prominent citizens belonging to all walks of life and communities including public men, social workers, writers, intellectuals, retired civil servants, doctors and advocates. In a one sentence statement they said "we support the demand of regional autonomy for Jammu within the framework of the State to promote friendly relations between its principal region and restore its politics on healthy and secular basis." I submitted their demand to the Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi on 3 June 1967 and also discussed it with the Union Home Minister.

To counter the anti-autonomy campaign, Jammu Autonomy Forum was set up of which I was the president. To quote another report of *Hindustan Times* dated 13 September,

1967: "The Forum's meetings in Jammu, Udhampur, Doda and Poonch have been well attended" and that "they appear to have made some dent in the solid wall of resistance put up by Congress and Jana Sangh".

Erosion of Sangh

According to the report of the paper, "the opposition to the autonomy move had already cost Jana Sangh considerable popular support."

By collaborating with the Kashmiri leadership of the ruling Congress party on this issue, the Sangh lost some of its credibility as a champion of regional interests of Jammu. It had also no plausible answer when the Autonomy Forum confronted it with a firm commitment of its founder president Dr Shyamaprasad Mukerjee in favour of regional autonomy. Moreover, the alternative solution, suggested by Jana Sangh, and supported by the Anand Marg, of the merger of Jammu and Kashmir State with Himachal virtually amounted to dividing the former State on Hindu Muslim basis and exposed its pretensions in favour of unity of the State. For the Muslim areas would have resisted such a merger at all costs. It had also undermined its position by proposing, before the Delimitation Commission, division of Jammu to carve out one Hindu majority constituency of Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua districts after merger of Poonch with the Shopian constituency of Anantnag (Kashmir) and Doda with Ladakh.

The controversy, in any case, caused confusion and rift in the ranks of the Sangh. Senior member of its Working Committee, Bachan Singh Panchhi took exception to the dictatorial manner in which "a section of the leadership adopted a negative attitude on the question of autonomy though the matter was never discussed in the executive or the general body of the party." Panchhi and his supporters left the party "to join the popular upsurge in favour of an autonomous status of Jammu within the State."

In a report on the situation in Jammu, *Nav Bharat Times* of 8 August, 1967 referred to the anomalous position of Jana Sangh. For "people failed to understand why it was opposing a demand in which interest of the people of Jammu seemed to

lie." *Pratap*, the Urdu daily of Delhi lamented that Jana Sangh leader Prem Nath Dogra was allergic to the word "Autonomy".

The Congress Party also suffered some loss of support on account of its opposition to the autonomy move. The president of its youth wing Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Youth Congress, Amrit Malhotra resigned from the party along with a large number of his Jammu colleagues to join the Autonomy Forum.

Meanwhile Sheikh Abdullah also joined the critics of regional autonomy. In a post-prayer meeting at Jammu, he condemned it as "a game of Indian imperialism." This brought Jana Sangh into still stranger company and exploded its charge that the move was sponsored by the secessionist leader of Kashmir.

"Jammu Autonomy Forum accused Sheikh Abdullah and Jana Sangh of appealing to communal sentiments of Muslims and Hindus respectively to oppose its move for regional autonomy.

"A statement issued by the Forum said that the communalizing of politics endangered the integrity of the State.

The forum regretted that the Sheikh had forgotten his own socio-economic plan for Kashmir promising decentralisation" (*Hindustan Times*, 4 May 1968).

Recalling Sheikh's earlier commitments in favour of regional autonomy, I said: "It is surprising that Abdullah, who accuses the Government of India of eroding the autonomy of the State, is now dismissing similar urges of Jammu" (*Patriot*, 30 May, 1968).

Support from Outside Jammu

The reaction in the Valley was not entirely hostile. Prem Nath Bazaz, perhaps the most vocal champion of the aspirations of Kashmiri Muslims, supported the proposal of regional autonomy. In his book *Kashmir in Crucible* (1967), he wrote:

> It is advisable that the three regions of the State—Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh—should stay together. But it is equally important that the means should be devised to unify them by removing their legitimate grievances and making them free, equal and happy partners in building a

democratic state.

Perhaps the best way of satisfying different aspirations is to reorganise the Jammu and Kashmir State as a regional federation. The re-organised State will have three constituent units and each of them can have equal status not subordinate to one another. A number of essential subjects of common interest would be assigned to the regional federation leaving the rest of the State functions to the constituent units.

In a message to the convention of Jammu Autonomy Forum on 19 November, 1967, Shamim Ahmed Shamim, MLA and Editor of the weekly *Aina Srinagar*, said:

As I attach great importance to the protection of autonomy, individuality and personality of Kashmir, I have deep interest in the programme and objective of the Autonomy Forum.....Whatever else might be said against those who are demanding autonomy for Jammu, it would be height of injustice to accuse them of communalism or anti-Kashmirism. Far from wanting to divide the State, they want to restore the mutual relations between Jammu and Kashmir on healthy and stable basis.

Shamim also gave notice of moving a constitutional amendment bill in the State Assembly incorporating the principal of regional autonomy.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the former Prime Minister of the State, also supported the principle.

Outside the State, it had received sympathetic consideration at a seminar on Kashmir convened by Jayaprakash Narayan and attended by persons like C. D. Deshmukh, Col. B. H. Zaidi, P. N. Sapru, Khushwant Singh and S. Mulgaokar. It stated : "all talks of emotional integration of Kashmir, normalisation of its politics and settlement about any particular constitutional status are completely meaningless unless urges of both Jammu and Kashmir can be harmonised" (*Kashmir Times*, Jammu, December, 1966).

Ahad Fatmi, Editor of *Bhoodan Tehrik*, who visited the State as a representative of Jayaprakash Narayan, reported that Jana Sangh, Congress and Plebiscite Front were opposing demand for regional autonomy without bothering to analyse

it. He said, in an article in his journal:

> The leaders of the autonomy movement have behind them a glorious tradition of democracy, secularism and progressive thinking. They have a history of active participation in the struggle of Kashmiris. The character of leaders and nature of the movement justify an objective and sympathetic assessment of the demand for changes in the administration of Ladakh and Jammu, (Reproduced in *Kashmir Times*, Jammu, 24 January, 1968).

More specifically Jayaprakash Narayan himself advocated "radical solutions including greater autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir State within the Union and within the State itself, autonomy for Jammu" (*Hindustan Times*, 31 March, 1968).

Sarvodaya leader and the Sarvodaya movement in general had always shown sympathetic understanding of the aspirations of the Kashmir Valley and Jammu region and were greatest sources of moral strength for whatever role I was able to play in reconciling diverse regional aspirations with each other and with national interest against grave odds.

The national press was also generally hospitable to the autonomy campaign. I wrote several articles in *Statesman*, *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express* and many other papers and journals on the subject. Thus though the campaign did not assume an agitational form, it acquired so much moral and political weight that it could not be dismissed. Even its opponents had been forced to admit the existence of the Jammu problem.

Gajendragadkar Commission

In order to "defuse" the situation, the State Government appointed, in consultation with the Union Government, the Jammu and Kashmir Commission of Enquiry on 6 November 1967. Earlier while announcing his intention of appointing the Commission, the Chief Minister G. M. Sadiq had said—as demanded by us—that it "would study the problem of the State on purely regional basis." Communal issues, he stressed, would not be allowed to come before the Commission (*Hindustan Times*, 20 October 1967).

P. B. Gajendragadkar, retired Chief Justice of India headed

the Commission while Shankar Prasada and Badr-ud-din Tyabji, ICS retired Secretaries of the Government of India were its other members. Its terms of reference included examination of policies regarding development, recruitment and admissions (to institutions of higher education) and "consider generally the causes that lead to irritations and tensions and to recommend remedial measures". The Commission was required to suggest measures not only for equitable share of resources among the regions of the State but also for conveying "a feeling of equal participation in the integrated development of the State."

Concretising its demand, Jammu Autonomy Forum, in its memorandum to the Commission, suggested :

> While number of subjects proposed to be delegated to the hill areas of Assam should broadly form the basis of a similar division in case of Jammu and Kashmir State, the regional administration may broadly follow the pattern of Delhi Metropolitan Council with which Parliament shares some of its legislature and executive power over the Union territory."

A *Statesman* report on 9 April 1968 further stated : "The Forum feels that a part of the power that the State enjoys within the Indian Union should be transferred to its three regions—Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The subjects in the State list must be divided in two parts : one to be retained by the State and other delegated to the regions. While there will be one Assembly, one Cabinet and one Chief Minister dealing with subjects of State importance, at regional level elected Regional Councils headed by a team of executive councillors will be similarly responsible for legislative and executive purposes.

"The Forum believes the present political set up is at the root of most of the regional inequities. The memorandum points out that the Muslims of Jammu, comprising one-fourth of the Muslim population of the State, have been neglected in services as well as political positions. The present unitary form of administration, it alleges, by suppressing regional urges, forces the people to seek communal alignments.

The memorandum states that regional autonomy will not only solve Jammu's specific problems but help evolve rational

and mutually satisfactory relations between Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh."

As a further measure of decentralization, the memorandum added that "the scheme of regional autonomy should be supplemented by some measure of district autonomy on the pattern of Zila Parishads, now in vogue in states like Maharashtra. In fact the scheme of regional autonomy should be linked with the three tier system of Panchayat Raj, envisaged by the Balwant Rai Committee report.

The other party that came close to the Stand of Autonomy Forum was Jammu and Kashmir National Conference led by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. In its memorandum to the Commission, it said. "Situation can be remedied if power is decentralized and given to locally elected organs at Tehsil, district and provincial levels (with a Cabinet at the top) with provisions for consideration of special provincial problems through democratically evolved instruments of power for administration..... Powers of the government should be so decentralized that proper control and supervision can be assured. Means will have to be devised so that this feeling of neglect and isolation in one province when the seat of government is in the other, can be eliminated."

Political Parties and Commission

Significantly the three leading parties of the State—Congress, Jana Sangh and Plebiscite Front, all of which opposed regional autonomy, did not appear before the Commission. *Hindustan Times* correspondent reported from Srinagar on 5 April, 1968 : "Political observers are intrigued that neither Congress nor Jana Sangh has submitted any memorandum to the Gajendragadkar Commission, probing into the regional disparities existing in the State. Both the parties had welcomed the appointment of the Commission. Their reluctance to give evidence is believed to be resulting from their bid to reconcile the conflicting claims."

Regarding the attitude of the Front, the Chairman of the Commission told a press conference that the date for receipt of memoranda had been extended on the suggestion of Kashmir Plebiscite Front President Mirza Afzal Beg who had written to

him that the party could not get sufficient time to determine its attitude towards the Commission or to collect material for a memorandum. The Front did not, however, send any memorandum (*Hindustan Times*, 20 April, 1968).

Seven months after the appointment of the Commission "the pro-Sheikh Plebiscite Front announced its decision of not cooperating" with it. A resolution adopted by its working Committee said : "the probe conducted by the Gajendragadkar Commission would possibly fan regional tensions" (*National Herald*, 23 May, 1969).

Meanwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in a public statement at Srinagar ruled out granting of regional autonomy to Jammu. Protesting against her remarks a resolution of the Autonomy Forum said : "Her statement implies a lack of respect for the august Commission and sympathy for aspirations of the people of Jammu." The resolution added : "Following as the Prime Minister's statement did the deliberations of National Integration Council, this statement challenges its basic objectives and principles which sought national integration on the basis of recognition of aspirations of all regions of the country" (*Hindustan Times*, 28 June, 1968).

Dr. Karan Singh who was a minister in Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet was naturally expected to fall in line with her policies, under the principle of joint responsibility, whatever might have been his personal views. As Jammu's representative in the Union Cabinet his lukewarm attitude to the demand of regional autonomy and willingness to accept a solution of the regional problem within the existing structure must also have weighed with the Commission.

The report of the Gajendragadkar Commission, submitted to the Government, in December, 1968, made a positive contribution to the debate on inter-regional relations in two major respects. First it stressed the need for recognition of regional identities in various fields of government activity. It said :

> Although the Jammu and Kashmir state has been a single political entity for over a hundred years, it cannot be denied that geographically, ethnically, culturally and historically, it is composed of three separate homogeneous regions, namely Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. In fact, the Pir

> Panjal range forms a natural dividing line between the Jammu and Kashmir regions.
>
> Secondly recognizing paramountcy of political aspiration, it conceded, even if all the matters were equitably settled, we feel that there would still be a measure of discontent unless the political aspirations of the different regions of the State were satisfied. In fact, we consider that the main cause of irritation and tension is the feeling of political neglect and discrimination, real or imagined, from which certain regions of the state suffer.

Welcoming these features of the report, which constituted the basic philosophy of the demand for regional autonomy, I, however, regretted that the Commission had refused to extend the logic of its own conclusions and "provide a mechanism for effective sharing and decentralization of political power among the three regions". I pointed out that it had "failed to suggest measures for reconciliation of the political aspirations of the three regions by insisting on a monolithic and unitary set up for the State". I added that the Commission's proposal to appoint by convention Deputy Chief Minister from Jammu and a Cabinet Minister from Ladakh amounted to "condemning the two regions to a status of perpetual servitude because the two regions can earn this privilege only by always electing the party to which Kashmir's Chief Minister may belong." I said that "the convention could be of use only if the office of Chief Minister was held in rotation by the two regions" (*Times of India*, 8 Dec., 1968).

I was, however, of the view that the recommendation of the Commission regarding setting up of statutory Regional Development Boards for the three regions was worth giving an honest trial. Elaborating my reactions to the report more fully at a meeting of the prominent citizens of Jammu, I also referred to its comments on regional autonomy. While theoretically conceding that it "may lead to greater consolidation of the region with the rest of the State" it rejected the demand for lack of support in the region and for its possible adverse impacts in the Valley. I argued that the Commission should have taken a decision on the merits of the proposal rather than on the num-

ber of people for or against it as it had no means of measuring public opinion. If possible Kashmiri reaction was a valid ground for rejecting Jammu's demand for autonomy, I said, the entire report of the Commission should be rejected as Kashmiri reactions against it were much sharper.

Khwaja Mubarak Shah, a former minister in Abdullah's government before 1953, who presided over the meeting, asserted that the Commission was absolutely wrong in presuming that the people of the Valley were opposed to the proposal of regional autonomy. While defending a federal structure for the state, he held its unitary form responsible for many of its problems.

Reacting to the press reports regarding Chief Minister GM Sadiq's reluctance to fully implement the report of the Commission, I said : "Though the Commission's recommendations fell considerably short of the aspirations of the people of Jammu, as also perhaps of the other regions, any arbitrary and unilateral changes made by the Chief Minister, even if approved by the Government of India, would defeat the very purpose of setting up of a high power commission and would gravely affect inter-regional confidence.....whatever changes are proposed in the report, must be considered and approved by the principal interests concerned. To avoid any suspicion of partiality and regional bias, the Chief Minister should convene a conference of the leaders of the three regions and share his reservations with them. He should seek to evolve a consensus over possible modifications in the report and measures for implementing it, keeping in view the interests of maintaining the integrity of the State" (*Hindustan Times*, 27 December, 1968).

The State Government continued its policy of drift and inaction on the report of the Commission for about 8 months till it convened an all party meeting on 30 July 1969 which, too, shelved a final decision on the crucial recommendation of the report regarding statutory Regional Development Boards.

The Boards that the Government appointed, over a year after the Commission's recommendation, were neither statutory nor representative. Majority of their members were civil servants and experts. But as even such boards never functioned,

the entire exercise of the Commission on the subject remained merely academic.

People's Convention

Meanwhile there was an opportunity for a meaningful and fruitful dialogue on inter-regional relations at the popular level. Jammu and Kashmir State People's Convention, representing practically the entire spectrum of political opinion of Kashmir and presided over by Sheikh Abdullah, was the forum for it. Besides, him, Prem Nath Bazaz (convenor), Maulana Mohd Saeed Musoodi, Mirza Mohd Afzal Beg and Shamim Ahmad Shamim (Organizing Secretary) were the members of the Sponsoring Committee.

With regard to the participation by the representatives from Jammu and Ladakh in the proposed conference, I said, in a press statement, that it would be fruitful if the Sheikh "ceases to have a closed mind on the question of inter-regional relations within the State and gives some indication of a minimum amount of respect for the aspiration and personalities of the regions." I referred to "the present campaign of condemnation and misrepresentation of the objectives and leaders of the regional autonomy move in Jammu" which, in my view, "had not helped in creating an ideal atmosphere for the proposed conference." I, however, offered that "a gesture of sympathy and understanding even at this stage would be more than responded by the people of Jammu" (*Statesman*, 4 June, 1968).

I received the formal invitation from Sheikh Abdullah (Chairman of the Sponsoring Committee) in August 1968 to attend the Convention which proposed to "calmly deliberate over the problem" (of future disposition of Jammu and Kashmir State) and "arrive at such conclusions as may bring about a lasting, honourable and equitable solution of the problem."

In my correspondence with the Sheikh and discussions with two members of the sponsoring Committee, Prem Nath Bazaz and Shamim Ahmad Shamim, who had come to Jammu for the purpose, I insisted that the agenda of the Convention be enlarged to include a discussion on inter-regional relations. My view was eventually accepted. Shamim gave a written

undertaking to the effect that "the issue of internal relations between three units of the State is quite relevant to the issues being discussed in the Convention and can be raised and discussed. I can say it authoritatively that this is the opinion of the Sponsoring Committee."

Announcing our decision to participate in the Convention, the invitees from Jammu issued the following statement :

> We have decided to participate in the State People's Convention on 10 October, on receiving clear assurance from the sponsors of the Convention that it was not anti-India and that it could discuss the question of Jammu's status within the State. Further we could not overlook the fact that inauguration of the Convention by a patriot of the eminence of Jayaprakash Narayan cannot fail to influence its character.
>
> We believe that the expected uninhibited discussion among diverse view points in the Srinagar Convention would indicate the strength of Indian democracy in the most vital part of the country and would at least help in undermining the cult of political untouchability and intolerance.
>
> A friendly get together of representatives of the two principal regions of the State itself would contribute to greater regional harmony and strengthening the unity of the State.

The signatories to the statement included Balraj Puri, Ghulam Qadir Bandey, Bachan Singh Panchi, Ved Bhasin, Master Roshan Lal, Dr. Karam Chand, Amrit Malhotra, Giani Sucha Singh and Rev. Aziz William. Actually, however, three of us—including Panchhi and Bhasin—attended the Convention and I was included in the 12-member Steering Committee ; the rest of its 11 members belonged to the Valley.

Debate on Inter-Regional Relations

In my long paper, heard with rapt attention by about 300 delegates, drawn mostly from the Valley, I touched the regional issue also and inter alia, said :

> There is not enough appreciation of the aspirations of the region other than to which one belongs. But if barriers of Pir Panchal and Zojila have been conquered, there is no reason why the walls of ignorance, misunderstanding and

prejudices—which history and politics have erected along these moutain ranges—cannot be similarly demolished.

I propose for the consideration of the Convention that the leaders of Kashmir, in particular the tallest of them Sheikh Abdullah, take an initiative in starting a dialogue with representatives of Jammu and Ladakh on the specific question of inter-regional relations before starting a dialogue with Delhi or insisting on Delhi-Pindi dialogue.....

It is the mutual fear and suspicion that drives the people in the Valley, on the one hand, and those in Jammu and Ladakh, on the other, to opposite directions. The reactions of the people, under such mutual provocations, are neither normal nor reflect their real interests and aspirations.

A free decision of the people also implies their freedom from momentary tensions and provocations. In the present internal set up of the State, there is a built-in provision for such tensions and provocations which must be corrected, to set our own house in order before negotiating with others.

A composite personality of any multi-regional or multi-cultural state can only be based on a federal set up. Unitary form of constitution that parties like Jana Sangh are preaching in India, has everywhere posed one of the greatest threats to unity of any multi-cultural state or nation under democracy.....

The idea of regional autonomy merely aims at decentralization of political power on the basis of its equitable distribution among the three regions of the State. It should indeed further percolate down through districts and tehsils to villages.....

It is the distinct historical, cultural and geographical personality of the Valley that has helped in evolving its homogeneous character and cement all its communities. A sense of Kashmiri pride has been the greatest bulwark against forces like communalism. Likewise, constitutional recognition of regional personality of Jammu would help in integrating its various communities. In particular, the most numerous communities of Jammu like Gujars, Harijans and other backward communities would get their real due and be able to secularise the politics of the region.....

Regional authorities would also considerably help in improving administrative efficiency.....

The Convention had two sessions, first in October 1968 and second in June 1970. In between the Steering Committee continued its deliberations. In its first resolution on guide lines for the political future of the State, the Committee agreed to add, at my suggestion, that its solution should keep in view "the interests of all regions". At the next stage it defined regional boundaries as they existed in 1947. Finally it adopted a five tier internal constitutional set up of the State envisaging regional autonomy and further devolution of political power to districts, blocks and panchayats. The full session of the Convention approved it in June 1970.

The decisions, though unanimous, were the outcome of prolonged and, at times, animated discussions among members. The groundwork was prepared by a sub-committee comprising Mirza Afzel Beg (Chairman), G.M. Karra, G.M. Shah, Moti Lal Misri and Balraj Puri.

In my working paper, which I was asked to prepare by the sub-committee, I drew upon constitutional and institutional arrangements for devolution of power in some of the states of India and some other countries of the world. Arguing that federalism was the best means for promoting integration and democratisation of a society, I used three quotations to support the argument.

1. A society becomes far more cohesive and strong if the diverse groups making it have as much freedom and opportunity as possible to manage their affairs and preserve and develop their uniqueness (Jayaprakash Narayan).
2. Federalism has created unity where none was possible under any other form of government (Prof. K.P. Brecher).
3. The strongest federal unions are those in which the local patriotism finds a comfortable place within the embrace of the larger national patriotism (Sir Frederick Whyte, first President of the Legislative Assembly of India).

The paper defined in detail, the powers and functions of

the lower four tiers and left the residue to the State.

Five Tier Set Up

The constitutional set up proposed by me was accepted with some modifications by the Steering Committee which was then endorsed by the Convention. It envisaged elected Regional Councils with Executive Councils. Its legislative powers were limited to the subjects transferred to the regions. Composition, powers and functions of institutions at district, block and panchayat levels were defined in greater detail.

Releasing the constitutional document to the press, Sheikh Abdullah said that "it was aimed at putting our own house in order" before deliberating on the State's future. "It was fear and suspicions of one region regarding the other which apparently prompted Jammu to opt for merger with India as against the Kashmir region wanting to join Pakistan." The present outline on the internal constitutional set up, he said, is our humble effort aimed at assuring the people that their regional interests would be safeguarded (*Times of India*, 25 October, 1969).

He told the Convention that "such a document could also usefully form the basis of our negotiations with Pakistan." (*Tribune*, 14 June 1970). In an article on "Process of Reducing Regional Tensions in Jammu and Kashmir" in *Statesman* of 12 June 1969, I concluded that India "can go a much longer way along with Kashmiri leaders in their current quest for evolving a decentralized polity and composite personality of the State on the basis of reconcilation of regional aspirations."

I had obvious reasons to welcome these decisions of the Kashmiri leaders. According to a PTI report (31 May 1969), I underlined the fact that "the decisions marked the single greatest contribution to reconcile and harmonise regional aspirations and to strengthen the integrity of the State". I said "as far as Jammu is concerned the decisions of the Steering Committee offer the finest deal ever made to its people by any set of Kashmiri leaders. For they recognize Jammu's distinct personality and a status of equality within the State."

"They were significant particularly because", I said, "attempts had continuously been made to break Jammu's

entity and its secular character by Kashmiri irredentists as well as by a party like Jana Sangh which not only tended to split Jammu politically on communal lines but also demanded detachment of its Muslim area for delimitation and other purposes."

Commending the decisions I said that "the five tier internal set up of the State proposed by the Steering Committee was an ideal democratic blue print to decentralize political power" (*Patriot*, 1 June 1969).

The convention marked, in many respects, a turning point in Kashmir politics. Its stand on the overall issue of the State's future, to which I also contributed my mite, considerably narrowed the gap between Kashmiri leaders and New Delhi. It set itself to the task of evolving "a formula for a peaceful, democratic, just and realistic solution of the State's future, keeping in view the interests of all its regions, as also the fact that such a solution should strengthen the secular democratic forces and should foster communal harmony, not only within the State of Jammu and Kashmir, but also in the whole subcontinent and should be in conformity with the past traditions and abiding values of our freedom movement."

No patriotic Indian could take any exception to this formulation. For India alone could foot this bill too. This resolution, along with that on inter-regional relations, ruled out the option of Pakistan. My understanding on both these counts with Kashmiri leaders further facilitated my mediational role between them and the Government of India. I tried to allay the apprehensions of the latter about the possible hostile reaction of Jammu against an overall settlement and also sought to mobilize Jammu's support for it.

VI

Accord and After

While the crisis of 1953 that alienated Kashmiri Muslims from the rest of India was precipitated by the Parishad agitation in Jammu for "full accession," Jammu and some of its leaders also played a positive role in the process of reintegration of the Valley with the national mainstream.

The attempts at regimentation of the politics of the State—the surest means of alienating its people—were, for instance, checked mainly because of resistance in Jammu. For Jammu was not only closer to the democratic mainstream, it was also not easy to dub its Hindu leaders as anti-national as was the case with Kashmiri dissenters.

Battle for Democracy

In fact opposition leaders of Jammu carried the battle for restoration of civil liberties right into the Valley. It was the socialist group of Jammu, including the writer, which, led by its national leader Asoka Mehta, made the first bid to hold an opposition meeting in public in Srinagar in November 1954 and in the process got beaten up by hirelings of the ruling party. The State PSP executive committee which met at Banihal was similarly assaulted. I received another severe beating at the behest of the then IGP, D.W. Mehra, for my audacity to wish Abdullah in the court room where he was brought for trial in October 1958. (Incidentally the issue was raised in Indian Parliament by the Opposition and in the Security Council by Pakistan).

The real thaw in the frozen politics of the Valley took place

when PSP contested an assembly seat from Srinagar city in 1962 with all campaigners and the candidate (Om Prakash Saraf) imported from Jammu. They addressed the first effective opposition rally in the heart of the city, the Lal Chowk. Though the candidate was defeated in the openly rigged elections, the contest was a landmark in the continuous battle for extending frontiers of Indian democracy to cover Kashmir.

By opposing repressive and authoritarian policies of the Government and expressing solidarity with the suppressed people of Kashmir, the leaders of Jammu provided non-secessionist outlets to their discontent.

Jammu—A Bridge

Further the efforts at reconciling diverse urges of Kashmir and Jammu through the principle of regional autonomy, with the consent of their respective representatives, helped in making Jammu a bridge rather than a barrier it had hitherto been between Kashmir and the rest of the country. From the strategic position of that bridge, I contributed my own mite in promoting understanding between Nehru and Abdullah and later between Indira Gandhi and Abdullah. I was also one of the links between the popular leadership of Kashmir and the other national leaders including Jayaprakash Narayan.

I am aware that other factors, notably the emergence of Bangladesh, and other personalities have played a more decisive role in the final Accord between Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah in 1975. But Jammu's contribution can in no way be dismissed. Without it other contributions might have been sabotaged.

While all my endeavours to articulate Jammu's aspirations were made in the perspective of the national interest, my mediational role at the national level on the Kashmir issue always kept in mind the crucial importance of the Jammu problem in it.

Assurances on Jammu's Status

Speaking in the Lok Sabha on 4 March 1975 on what was called the Kashmir Accord, the Prime Minister expressed her

deep concern with the problems of Jammu and Ladakh. She said : "During the discussions with Sheikh Abdullah I made it a point to mention the anxieties and difficulties of these regions." The Sheikh had assured her of "his own awareness and his desire to treat all regions equitably."

In order to allay these anxieties, he had convened a convention of representatives of Jammu and Ladakh at Srinagar in August 1974 whose cooperation he sought on the basis of the autonomous status assured to these regions in the internal constitutional set up of the State adopted by the People's Convention, under which, he assured them that no regions would be able to dominate over the other.

On the eve of his swearing in as the Chief Minister, he told J&K Pradesh Congress Legislative Party on 24 February 1975 :

> On my part, I will make a sincere effort to ensure that all the three regions not only have equal opportunity for full and speedy development but that the people in every part of the State have a sense of full participation in the political affairs of the State.

He repeated the same assurance in his first broadcast after resuming power, from Radio Kashmir, Jammu, on 26 February, in which he added that he "shall think of some important and specific steps after consulting constitutional experts." Again, the State Governor L.K. Jha, in his address to the Joint Session of the State Legislature on 6 March 1975, used similar words to repeat the assurance of his government to decentralize and diffuse political power and administration "so as to reach down to every level from the state to a region, and farther afield to the district, and Panchayat levels." On 2 August Om Prakash Saraf MLC was informed in the State Legislative Council on behalf of the Chief Minister that the government intended to set up a small committee to assess the possibilities of further decentralization of constitutional and administrative powers consistent with the need to preserve the integrity and unity of the State.

The Chief Minister's party National Conference, in a policy statement entitled *Why National Conference* ? released in January 1976, justified the existence of a State party against a national party on the ground that it was "particularly suited

to evolve a composite personality of the State by harmonising the diverse regional aspirations." It said :

> In order to respect regional personalities and accommodate their respective needs and sentiments, not only the party is organized on the basis of a federal structure with provincial committees for each of the three regions of the State, it also proposes to re-organize the internal constitutional set up of the State on similar lines; which would provide regional autonomy and further decentralize political power through appropriate institutional arrangements at the district, block and village levels."

The main political resolution adopted at the first party session of the revived National Conference held in Jammu on 24 April 1976, asserted that it stood for stable unity of the State on the basis of decentralisation of political power among its three regions and at other levels. As Chairman of the Reception Committee, I said, in my welcome address :—

> The National Conference leaders are committed to a federal constitutional set up for the State ; according to which political power would be decentralised through five tier set up.....This would enable the people to have maximum power to settle their own affairs and, while maintaining individuality of various cultural units of the State, would establish a relationship of friendship and equality and of willing cooperation and unity among them.

Rise and Fall of N.C.

District conventions of the party in Jammu region reiterated the line adopted at its State level session. During that period the party genuinely aspired to articulate and represent the aspirations of the region. In a short time it filled a large part of the political vacuum in the region which was reflected in a record membership of over three lakhs.

As a token of their appreciation of the role National Conference was playing in Jammu region under my presidentship, 100 prominent citizens, including leading intellectuals and writers and leaders of trade unions, cultural, social, professional and student organisations, publicly felicitated me at a crowded function in Gulab Bhawan, Jammu, on 22 August 1976.

Addressing a warmly receptive audience, I pleaded that just as Article 370 in the Indian Constitution provided emotional basis for integration of the majority of the people of the State with the rest of the country, further devolution of political power would strengthen internal integrity and unity of the State. Stressing the vital geo-political role of Jammu, I urged the citizens of Jammu to discord sectarianism of all kinds whether based on religion, region, or language. I said : "the historic Accord between Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Government of India would have been impossible but for the effective contribution of the leaders of Jammu in the prolonged dialogue that preceded it." The support of the people of Jammu made it a real success, I added.

Thereafter the ruling party set itself on a course of rapid decline in the region. Aside from non-implementation of its pledges to the people of Jammu, non-representation of its regional unit in the Government (excepting one minister of State) and in the organisational set up (all office bearers of the party at the State level belonged to the Valley) did not inspire confidence in the region about the Jammu policy of the party. One of the first persons to warn me against the possible consequences of regional imbalance in the power structure of the State was Indira Gandhi. Commenting on the composition of Abdullah's cabinet, soon after its formation in 1975 she told me that while it included two top guns from the Valley, Jammu was represented in it by what she called a non-entity, which would upset regional balance. I should have pressed my claim, she advised, for a known political person like me would have inspired confidence of the people of Jammu better. Further a section of Kashmiri leaders seemed deeply apprehensive of the emergence of an effective and popular leadership in Jammu. Efforts were soon afoot to cut it down to size. Sectarian interests and personal jealousies also stimulated these efforts. Were these efforts a part of the old design of Kashmiri irredentists, who wanted to annex Muslim majority areas of Jammu with the Valley by breaking Jammu's identity ; in which Hindu communalists of the region always collaborated wittingly or unwittingly ?

Exception was taken to my demand for regional autonomy made at the meeting of the citizens of Jammu by none other than Jana Sangh. Its member in the State Assembly, Rishi Kumar Kaushal raised the issue on the floor of the house.

In retrospect it does not seem much surprising that in the Lok Sabha poll of 1977, a faction of National Conference and the entire Congress Party campaigned for former Jana Sangh candidate Thakur Baldev Singh who defeated me by a narrow margin; though I was taken unawares by the triple alliance at that time.

As if that was not enough, my removal from the presidentship of the Jammu Provincial National Conference was manouvered ; which I heard on the Radio on 29 April without any other prior notice to the subsequent written intimation. Later I, along with my other colleagues including Vice-President of the provincial unit Bachan Singh Panchhi and Jammu Youth National Conference President Sham Sunder Anand Lehar, was expelled from the primary membership of the party also, again without any notice. The precise reasons for such actions by the President of the Party are still unknown to me.

Referring to them, in a letter to the Party President Sheikh Abdullah, I said : "Apart from doubtful constitutional validity and political propriety, your actions have hurt me for personal reasons also." Discussing the political situation at that time, I added :—

> You have been trying to articulate and champion the regional aspirations of Kashmir and have successfully used them for your political objectives.....I had been pleading with you that a similar articulation of Jammu's regional sentiments was necessary to channelise them on healthy lines to meet the challenge of communal forces and to sustain a regional party. In fact the revival of National Conference as a regional party was justified by you on the ground that it represented the aspirations of the three regions of the State better than any other party..... The party leaders had not only given up stress on satisfying regional aspirations (of Jammu) but your failure to give appropriate representation to Jammu unit of the party in the government and the organisation also undermined its prestige in the

region. I pointed out these facts mainly to find out the causes of growing alienation of the party from the people of Jammu. I had said in the meeting of the Provincial Committee (convened and presided over by me on 27 April) that if the party could not be made a fit instrument for representing regional aspirations, then we should reconcile the lack of support for the party in the region and that we should not be criticised for lacking popular support.....It hurts me that for giving an objective assessment of the situation, I am clubbed as a regionalist. If I had associated myself and gave the best years of my life to defend your right to represent Kashmiri aspirations, I expected tolerance on your part to allow me to make National Conference an appropriate instrument for representing Jammu's aspirations.....

I had thrown some of these ideas for discussion (in the meeting) without taking any rigid position of my own. I had offered to be flexible and contribute my mite in evolving a commonly acceptable policy and strategy for the party.

In another letter to the Sheikh after the assembly poll in which National Conference swept most of the Muslim seats and all its candidates lost security deposits in Hindu areas, I urged him to "take special care to avoid further polarisation of the State on communal lines." I reiterated the view that "institutional measures that we had discussed and agreed upon years ago to satisfy genuine regional aspirations can go a long way in secularising the politics of the State."

None of these letters was acknowledged. In fact the doors for a dialogue on the subject banged so abruptly and unceremoniously by the Sheikh remained so thereafter also.

A Live Issue

The issue, however, remained alive. The State Executive of Janata Party, of which I became a member, demanded "constitutional provisions for equitable share of political power among the three regions of the State and its further decentralization on democratic lines at district, block and panchayat levels." In a resolution moved by me and passed at its meeting

held in Jammu on 20 June 1978 under the presidentship of Maulana Mohammad Syed Masoodi, President of the State Unit the party described such provisions as "the best guarantee to remove tensions and imbalances between and within regions, to strengthen secular basis of the State, to ensure sense of participation to the people in the democratic process and to speed up economic development." The party pledged itself to work for strengthening the integrity of the State and declared that for this purpose it would strive for "satisfaction of genuine regional aspirations and establish a relationship of equality and friendship between the three regions of the State" (*Kashmir Times*, 21 June 1978).

It was possible to adopt the resolution unanimously as the former Jana Sangh faction had boycotted the meeting of the Executive on the ground of its inadequate representation on it.

Meanwhile the Sheikh revived his demand for enlargement of the autonomy of the States in general and of Jammu and Kashmir in particular. He asserted that restoration of the pre-1953 status of the State was his condition for resuming power in 1975. Speaking on the subject in the State Assembly he said : "In case India abandons her ideals, do you think for a minute we will stay with it ? "

Reacting to Abdullah's statements I said in an article circulated by *INFA* (9 November 1977) :

> Much would depend upon the manner power gained from the Centre to the State is used.....
>
> The attitude of the people of Jammu and Ladakh to the issue of the autonomy of the State will also depend upon on how much autonomy they get within the state. Any talk of the 1953 status should not overlook the fact that definite promises were made about the devolution of power to these two regions in that very year.

I suggested that the Sheikh must fulfil the following three vital conditions to ensure a smooth dialogue and a possible satisfactory settlement on the Centre-State relations :

> First the question of the status of the State should be completely and forever delinked from that of accession or de-accession. Second, settlement of inter-regional relations

on the basis of past categorical commitments of Sheikh Abdullah should precede any attempt at reviewing the Centre-State relations. Third, democratic rights—in particular to oppose and differ—should be fully restored.

In conclusion, I added :

Only a composite and mentally integrated personality of the State, which ensures freedom of its citizens and unreservedly prides in being a part of India, can seek, deserve and maintain a place of honour and satisfaction, not merely in the literal constitutional sense but more importantly in the political and emotional sense.

Regional Upsurge

However, alienation of the ruling party in Jammu region continued to grow at an alarming rate till an incident of police firing on student demonstrations against complaints of irregularities in recruitment of teachers in the border town of Poonch on 2 December 1978, which martyred Waryam Singh, provided the flash point of mass regional upsurge.

The Chief Minister convened a meeting of political leaders of Jammu at his residence on 10 December to discuss the situation. He agreed to the demand for a judicial probe into the Poonch firing, to rectify irregularities committed in the selection of teachers and offered to consider all specific grievances of the people of Jammu.

I pleaded in the meeting that instead of dealing with the symptoms he should deal with the root cause of the malaise. As long as the people of Jammu were deprived of their legitimate share in political power, I said, their grievances in the fields of development, recruitment and admissions could not be effectively redressed ; nor could their redressal be a substitute for their political aspirations. In this connection I remihded the Chief Minister of our commitments made jointly and separately about the constitutional safeguards for the regions within the State. I offered to consider any modifications or dilution of the agreed proposals in case he felt, after his experience in the government, a need for the same.

The Chief Minister parried the suggestion. However, according to an official briefing "Sheikh Abdullah conceded

almost all the demands "of the opposition." *Statesman* (12 December 1978) further quoted him as having said that his government had "decided to set up Regional Development Boards to undo regional imbalances."

At that stage even such a step might have defused the situation. But intriguingly the press note was withdrawn before it could be published in any other paper.

The 21-member All Party Jammu Committee which was formed to express its solidarity with the demands of the Poonch agitation, and of which I was a member, later enlarged its scope to struggle for a permanent solution of the Jammu problem. With this end in view the Committee unanimously adopted the following proposals on 26 December 1978 :

> There should be a statutory, political and democratic set up at regional, district, block and panchayat levels with a view to giving a sense of participation to all sections of people and areas within each region and furthering the following objectives :
>
> 1. Strengthening the national integration and integrity of the State ;
> 2. Promoting communal harmony ;
> 3. Maintaining identity of the three regions of the state ;
> 4. Ensuring a sense of equality among the people of the three regions ; and
> 5. Safeguarding the interests of minorities, scheduled castes, socially and educationally backward classes and backward areas, displaced persons and ex-servicemen.

As the formulation of Jammu's demands was in line with the five tier constitutional set up earlier suggested by the Chief Minister himself, albeit in a more flexible form, it could form a good basis for a dialogue. But communications on the subject to him were not even acknowledged. Meanwhile another round of firing in Poonch on 5 February 1979, claiming five more young lives, further aggravated the situation.

Talking to newsmen at Jammu on 13 February, the Chief Minister said that "force would be met by force" and ruled out any dialogue with the agitators on the question of regional imbalances. He repeatedly said that the agitation was directed against Kashmiris. He said Kashmir could not be treated as a

colony (*Hindustan Times* 14 March 1979). The Sheikh made attempts, through some more statements to arouse Kashmiri sentiments against the Jammu agitation.

In a press statement I along with three other members of All-Party Jammu Committee—Khan Mohammad Ayub Khan, Tilak Raj Sharma and Dhan Raj Bargotra—accused the Chief Minister "of attempting to alienate people of Kashmir from their brethren in Jammu and distorting facts about the Jammu agitation." The statement said, "He has condemned the agitation for the demands it never made." We added : "It is completely incorrect to say that Jammu leaders were opposed to the interests of Kashmir. The basic demand of All Party Jammu Committee was for devolution of power at regional, district, block and panchayat levels and it applies alike to all the three regions of the State and is intended to safeguard the interest of all of them in an equitable manner and promote inter-regional and inter-communal harmony" (*Indian Express*, 20 March, 1979).

Concern Over Jammu Agitation

There was widespread concern in the country over prolonged disturbances in Jammu. Madhu Limaye was one of the national leaders who correctly diagonesed the situation and in a letter to the State Chief Minister dated 14 February, 1979 advised him that it was neither a law and order problem nor a communal disturbance. He, however, warned that efforts to distort the character of the Jammu Government and misinterpret it in the Valley would damage inter-regional and inter-communal relations which would have wider repercussions. He said :

> "While I have always appreciated your struggle to secure a democratic and autonomous Kashmir within a democratic, secular and forward looking India with a view to ensuring its being a willing and emotionally integrated part of the country, I also recall your numerous past commitments in favour of the similar autonomy to the three regions of the State to ensure J&K State's integrity and unity—emotional and political. In fact the best guarantee for the special status of the state is the willing support of all the people of

all regions for it by granting each one of them some sort of internal autonomy."

The Chief Minister in his reply to Madhu Limaye (14 February 1979) rejected the idea of regional autonomy—for the first time. He attributed it to Karan Singh and argued that the Gajendragadkar Commission had rejected it. The Development Boards, he said, were set up in Sadiq's regime but were abolished by his successor Mir Qasim as they were not able to contribute much. He also referred to the heterogeneous character of Jammu region.

Joining issues with the Sheikh I reminded him, in a letter from Central Jail, Jammu, where I was lodged as a Satyagrahi during the agitation, of his own commitments in favour of regional autonomy since 1952. I wondered how a person who championed the principle of federalism at the national level could refuse to apply a dose of it at the state level. For "if reiteration by the Government of India to retain Article 370 in the Constitution of India, under the Accord of 1975, helped in the emotional integration of Kashmir with the rest of India, a similar provision in the constitution of the State for regions, would help in integrating them."

Conceding cultural and communal diversity within Jammu region, I suggested that it could be reconciled by the same principle, that is, by a measure of autonomy at district, block and panchayat levels.

I also admitted his right to change his views on the subject but asked : "Should you not have tried to convince or at least convey the change in your views to a person like me who has shared these views with you, was associated with your political movement for over 35 years and was mainly answerable on your behalf to the people of Jammu." Contesting his reasons for change of his views, I further asked how could the idea of regional autonomy be condemned retrospectively by attributing it to Karan Singh. For it was mooted about 17 years before he entered politics. "At any rate to condemn it simply because of its association with him is as untenable as was the plea of Bhartiya Jana Sangh which condemned it in 1967 for having been sponsored by "pre-Abdullah elements."

I also disagreed with his interpretation of the report of the

Gajendragadkar Commission which had theoretically conceded that the regional autonomy would consolidate Jammu's relations with the Valley. "In any case without accepting the alternative recommendation of the Commission regarding statutory Regional Development Boards, it is unfair to use its arguments to dismiss the idea."

I also approached Jayaprakash Narayan to intervene in the situation. For I believed, he had the requisite moral authority to do so. I reminded him, in a letter, that while I had completely identified with him in his championism of the aspirations of Kashmir Valley and its political movement led by Sheikh Abdullah in opposition to the Maharaja and later to the Government of India, "all along our (of J.P. and mine) understanding—with Sheikh Sahib—was that our support for regional identity and Kashmiri aspirations implied similar recognition of identities and aspirations for Jammu and Ladakh." I warned against attempts being made to whip up regional chauvinist sentiments in the Valley and Muslim communal sentiments in Jammu. Simultaneously, I added, "Hindu communalists and other type of parochial and vested interests are no less active to divert Jammu's movement to anti-Kashmiri and anti-Muslim channels."

Karan Singh, too, separately urged Jayaprakash Narayan to intervene in the situation. His two emissaries, A.C. Sen and S.H. Kazi, visited Jammu and came to see me in the jail. We agreed on the need for institutional and constitutional means to improve inter-regional and inter-communal harmony. J.P. addressed a simultaneous appeal to the students and All Party Jammu Committee as well as to his "Esteemed friend Sheikh Abdullah" which contained the essence of my agreement with his emissaries.

I also personally presented the case of All Party Jammu Committee to the Prime Minister Morarji Desai, his other senior Cabinet colleagues and political leaders including Janata Party president Chandra Shekhar. Morarji disapproved of the incidents of violence in the Jammu agitation and asked "why don't you resort to satyagrah ?" In a Press statement on 15 February from New Delhi, I regretted the Chief Minister's attempts to give all possible bad names to the people of

Jammu and their agitation and his threats to use force to suppress it. I asserted that All Party Jammu Committee would 'meet the state force with non-violent agitation and chauvinistic slogans with our faith in regional and communal harmony."

Chandra Shekhar agreed to my suggestion to send a team of three members of Parliament of his party--Surrendra Mohan, Kanwar Lal Gupta and Rudolf Rodrigues, to study the situation in Jammu. While sympathetic to our movement, Kanwar Lal, after meeting the Chief Minister in Jammu, was skeptical about our demand for a statutory regional set up and warned us against its possible implications. On his return he appreciated the "reasonableness" of the Chief Minister and suggested that appointment of a Committee of experts to study the problem of imbalances should defuse the situation.

The Home Minister H.M. Patel visited Jammu two days after I apprised him in Delhi of the seriousness of the situation. He showed an understanding of our basic contention that satisfaction of political aspirations of the region and constitutional arrangements for providing a sense of participation to people at various levels alone could lead to a durable solution of the problem. But he insisted that his hands would be considerably strengthened if the proposed satyagrah of All Party Committee was suspended. The Committee received a similar appeal from Chandra Shekhar.

Satyagrah and Negotiations

The Committee finally decided not to ignore these friendly appeals and to start Satyagrah, inter-alia, to recover its grip over the situation, which was so far mainly led by the students, and to give a non-violent turn to the popular agitation.

The only political group at the national level which took sustained interest in the Jammu movement was that of the former Jana Sangh in Janata Party ; though it had its reservations about the movement's objectives. In Jammu a part of this group, including its two MLA's Rishi Kumar Kaushal and Shiv Charan Gupta were openly hostile to it. Kaushal publicly declared that even thousands of such agitations could not remove Abdullah. He claimed to represent the party line. The claim did not seem to be far wrong as he was invariably

included in consultations on the State politics by the group's national leaders.

The other faction led by the then member of Parliament from Jammu, Thakur Baldev Singh and Chaman Lal Gupta actively participated in the movement. By their better coordination between the national and local levels of the group, it acquired a more important position in the final phase of the movement and in the negotiations with the Government.

Janata leader (former Jana Sangh) Yagya Dutt Sharma came by a special plane, borrowed from the Madhya Pradesh Government, to fetch Baldev Singh. In Delhi the basis of agreement with the State Chief Minister was settled, more or less on the lines earlier suggested by Kanwar Lal Gupta.

I and some of the members of All Party Jammu Committee believed that a political settlement was necessary on inter-regional relations, the details of which could be worked out by a committee of experts. But according to the draft proposal of the Chief Minister such a Committee was to "look into the question of regional imbalances in the field of development, services and admission in the professional institutions and to suggest measures, constitutional or otherwise, to remove the imbalances and to ensure permanently a just and an equitable treatment to all the regions of the State and all areas within the regions."

The Chief Minister rejected our suggestion to include in the terms of reference of the proposed commission the objective of providing "a sense of equal participations," on the ground that "the demand for internal autonomy within the regions has already been rejected by the Gajendragadkar Commission."

Our other colleagues insisted that we should not take a rigid stand in view of their assessment that the movement was petering out and there was increasing pressure from Delhi to "defuse" the situation. The draft was finally accepted with a few changes. The covering letter conveying the decision of the Committee to the Chief Minister, however, reiterated that "our basic commitment is to ensure for the people of all the three regions a sense of equal participation in the affairs of the State, because this is necessary both in the context of

democratic governance and also to strengthen the integrity of the State and the sense of partnership of the people belonging to the three regions." The letter expressed surprise over the Chief Minister's reference to a particular aspect (i.e. regional autonomy) of the Gajendragadkar Commission report. For it was ten years old and since then there had been number of political developments in the State and the rest of the nation.

Unresolved Problem

Thus the agitation that started on 2 December 1978 ended on 6 March 1979. If in spite of its unprecedented local support and nationwide sympathetic interest, it could not fully achieve its objectives, it was partly due to lack of united and clear-headed leadership.

"The formal withdrawal of the three-month old agitation in Jammu has not brought the two sides appreciably closer to each other." I observed in an article on "Unresolved Part of Jammu Problem" circulated by *INFA* (29 March 1979). I argued that basic aspirations of the people cannot merely be expressed in material terms. "Moreover, an enquiry into respective share of regions and areas within regions in the fields of development, services and admissions that the Chief Minister had insisted on including in the terms of reference of the proposed committee, does not really need the help of expert minds; it is a question of facts and figures which any honest clerk can do."

I, however, conceded that "Sheikh Abdullah alone is not responsible for evading the basic issue. He has his allies—willing or unwilling in Jammu. Some of the militant campaigners for the redressal of specific grievances are lukewarm about institutional and constitutional arrangement for an equitable share of political power between and within regions."

I concluded : "At the movement, the people of Jammu are not at all rigid about the composition and power of the regional set up. They can therefore be persuaded to give a trial to any amount of regional autonomy. But the policy of too little and too late makes feasible solutions of today unworkable by tomorrow."

The State Government set up the Commission of Inquiry

on 2 June 1979. It was headed by Justice S.M. Sikri, retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and included Professor Malcolm Adiseshia and A.R. Kidwai. As later Kidwai was appointed Governor of Bihar, he was replaced by Dr. M. Zaheer who also acted as Secretary of the Commission.

It took a long time for the All Party Committee to come to an agreement on a "concrete proposal". In a brief note submitted to the Commission on constitutional and political remedies, the Committee reiterated its demand for a five tier set up. It referred, in this context, to the provisions of Articles 371, 371A to 371F and fifth and sixth schedule of the Constitution of India. It cited the instance of Meghalaya, before becoming a separate State, when "Special provision was made in the Constitution to satisfy the regional and political aspirations of the people of that area (within Assam), with legislative and executive powers to regional authority."

When we appeared before the Commission on behalf of All Party Committee, its internal differences on the constitutional set up of the State had been considerably narrowed down. We built up a case for devolution of political power in the State along five tiers. We proposed Regional Committees with executive authority on the pattern of Meghalaya (in the undivided Assam) or the Union territory of Delhi which shared power with the Centre.

New and old Commissions

Earlier I had submitted an elaborate written memorandum to the Commission in my personal capacity; which I wanted to be treated as continuation of the memorandum submitted by me on behalf of Jammu Autonomy Forum to the Gajendragadkar Commission. I urged the present Commission to start from where the previous Commission ended "taking into full account the way it dealt with various view points, its major recommendations, extent of their implementation and reasons for their non-implementation."

The memorandum pointed out inadequacies in the recommendations of the Gajendragadkar Commission regarding satisfaction of the political aspirations of different regions of the State; which included designation of a Deputy Chief

Minister from the region other than to which the Chief Minister belonged and parity between the regions in their representation on the cabinet." For the presumption underlying them is that the ruling party has a uniform base throughout the State. Otherwise what satisfaction the people of Jammu can draw if the ruling party, most of the candidates of which lost their security deposits in the last assembly election, nominates some non-entities or unpopular leaders to increase the regional quota and makes one of them a Deputy Chief Minister."

The memorandum further recalled that the Gajendragadkar Commission had not rejected the principle of regional autonomy. It had in fact conceded its theoretical soundness. But it had merely doubted whether it represented the aspirations of a large majority of the population of Jammu region. Secondly it was afraid that the acceptance of the demand would make an adverse impact on the minds of the residents of Kashmir region.

The memorandum underlined the fact that events subsequent to the release of the Gajendragadkar Commission's report had conclusively belied both these contentions. Kashmir's favourable response to the idea of regional autonomy was demonstrated by its entire representative leadership at Jammu and Kashmir State People's Convention in 1968. Sheikh Abdullah's mumerous reiterations in its favour till 1979 also showed that his Kashmiri followers were far from hostile to it.

At any rate in Jammu—which was directly concerned with it—a much wider consensus had emerged in support of it. Quoting from the resolutions of Janata Party and All Party Jammu Committee, the memorandum said that while there might not be a unanimity on the quantum of autonomy needed at various administrative tiers, the case for devolution of power, in principle, had been conceded by all of them.

While the idea of regional autonomy was discussed elaborately in the memoranda presented to Gajendragadkar and Sikri Commissions, no rigid position was taken on its actual framework. "For it must be evolved with goodwill and consent of leaders of all regions and communities as also of distinct areas and cultures within each region."

The movement for regional autonomy had a chequered

history. But every major party had supported it at one time or the other. Out of the two main articulations of Jammu's aspirations—regional autonomy and demand for abrogation of Article 370—only the former has survived. For almost all parties in the country, including the former Jana Sangh, have reconciled to the continuation of the Article and those who believed that its abrogation would solve Jammu's problem have now to look for an alternative solution. Moreover, the principle that governs Centre-State relations should now apply to State-Region relations with greater validity.

VII

Imbalances

Aside from political articulations of Jammu's aspirations, discussed in the preceding pages, much heat has been generated by the controversy on what is called regional imbalance, in the economic field.

Economic factors are a vital part of popular aspirations everywhere. Rival claims over share in the economic cake, the size of which is increasing at a slower pace than the speed of rising needs and expectations, are responsible for many a tension among groups and communities all over the country. But the converse is no less true. For political inequities are often a major cause of economic imbalances and political tensions prevent reconcilation over economic disputes.

During the Jammu agitation of 1978-79, the State Government publicised statistics to prove that Jammu's share in development outlays and recruitments during the Abdullah regime not only improved over what it used to be in previous regimes, it was also larger than that of more populous Kashmir Valley.

Symptom or Cause

If the government's case lacked credibility, there were political reasons also for the credibility gap. But presuming the official figures to be true, why did discontent in Jammu rise precisely during the period when, according to the Government, the share of the region had increased ? Obviously because non economic factors, too, fanned the discontent and, as I argued in an article, "the clamour for more jobs and

development money is not merely the basis of regional discontent but also its main manifestation" (*Times of India*, 2 January 1980).

Referring to the Chief Minister's offer to look into the issue of Jammu's grievances over its share in services and development, I added : "Unless the State Government adopts a well defined and commonly agreed policy on recruitment and the allocation of development funds, the offer will amount to no more than a pious wish."

A major weakness of the protest movements in Jammu against "regional imbalances" has been that they were neither related to the political causes and remedies recruitment and development policies. Some of the militant's movements for the redressal of specific grievances merely succeeded in diverting popular attention from demands for basic policy revisions.

An attempt to catalogue Jammu's grievances in terms of its inadequate share in various categories of government jobs and admission to technical institutions or in development outlays of various departments would hardly serve much purpose. For sueh an exercise can yield accurate results only if undertaken by a government or through its active cooperation. Moreover as it is nobody's case that imbalances do not exist and the State Government has repeatedly declared its intention of correcting them, an attempt to prove them would be unnecessary.

Keeping in view the overall perspective, what would be a rational and equitable criteria for recruitments, admission and development outlays ?

Discussing the importance that the question of communal proportion in services had acquired in the politics of the State, the memorandum of the Jammu Autonomy Forum to the Gajendragadkar Commission said : "Though only a fraction of each community is absorbed by the administration, it constitutes its educated elite, which lacks alternative avenues of employment in the State. Share in services, thus, in a way measures the status of a community. Moreover, in a State where, due to inadequacies of democracy, popular aspirations fail to be reflected at political level, government officers

symbolize political importance of their respective communities; particularly when political favouritism is the most dominating factor in recruitments and promotions."

Communal And Regional Share

The foremost issue around which process of politicisation of the majority community began in the State was that of its inadequate representation in government services. Communal consideration has officially been a part of the recruitment policy of the State ever since the Glancy Commission, appointed after the mass Muslim upsurge of 1931, recommended that "due regard should be paid to the legitimate interests of every community in the matter of recruitment to Government services and the grant of scholarship for training."

The fact that till recently the State Government used to periodically release statistical data regarding communal composition of its staff indicated that it accepted the legitimacy of communal claims.

As regional consciousness started growing after 1947, regional claims became more vocal. The State Government supplied data on the communal as well as regional share in the services to the Gajendragadkar Commission which was required, inter alia,"to recommend measures for giving an equitable share in government employment to the various *regions and communities*" again implying legitimacy of communal as well as regional claims (Emphasis added).

In 1954 fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution were made applicable to the State which did not permit recruitment to service on communal or regional considerations.

The difficulty was sought to be overcome by declaring all Muslims of the State and all Hindus of Jammu as backward and fixing their share in recruitment and promotion. In an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, in Triloki Nath versus the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the Government admitted that 50 per cent of the posts were filled by Muslims of the entire State and 40 per cent by Hindus of Jammu.

The court struck down this rule as ultra vires of the Constitution in April 1968. But the State Govt. found means to circumvent this and other similar adverse judicial

pronouncements. The interview marks of the candidates were manipulated with the objective of maintaining a communal (or regional) balance. For instance, the Chairman of the Selection Committee for admission to the medical college admitted, in his affidavit in a case before the State High Court, that "the academic merit of the candidates was not at all considered by the Committee" (1967, AIR, J&K, 107).

The High Court held, "a bare selection of the candidates on the basis of marks allotted to them at the interview ignoring completely their academic merit is patently unreasonable, arbitrary and subjective so as to at once violate the provisions of Article 14 of the Constitution. Such a mode of selection gives an absolute and uncanalised power to the Committee to tilt the balance in favour of any candidate by plumping up marks at the interview and thus converting merit into demerit or demerit into merit." Interview itself—lasting "two to three minutes"—was based on 'unreasonable and arbitrary allotment of marks to various heads" (Quoted in the memorandum to the Gajendragadkar Commission).

Yet the interview system persists, ostensibly retained to correct regional and communal imbalances but in practice also to sustain arbitrariness, nepotism and corruption in appointments and admissions.

The agitation in Poonch, I had observed in an article, "was in protest against alleged arbitrariness, nepotism and corruption in recruitment to government services. It is learnt that the government had instructed the recruitment board to fill the vacancies keeping in view the communal proportion in the district disregarding the merit of the candidates. The government conceded that the merit had been ignored but argued that the interests of the backward communities had to be protected. The protest movement in Jammu did not object to keeping in view considerations other than merit but insisted that backward communities be indentified and rational legally enforceable recruitment policy be announced."

The Supreme Court had, in fact, taken a similar position on the subject. Setting aside the promotions of teachers made on communal or regional basis, it had, in Triloki Nath versus Jammu and Kashmir State, conceded that "this will not, how-

ever, prevent the State from devising a scheme, consistent with the Constitutional guarantees, for reservation of appointments, posts or promotions in favour of any backward class of citizens which in the opinion of the State is not adequately represented in the services."

Backward Classes

In order to evolve a commonly acceptable solution of the controversy in the light of the verdict of the Supreme Court, I organized a Seminar, as a member of the Executive Committee of All India Backward Classes Federation, at Jammu on 30 May 1968 which was represented by major castes and communities of the State. It, inter alia, adopted the following conse sus :

> The present basis of classification of the backward communities (on the basis of religion) was not only unconstitutional but unjust, irrational and politically inadvisable.
>
> The Seminar rejects religion as a determinant of backwardness. For there is no religion the membership of which automatically bestows a status of advancement or backwardness. The Seminar further suggests that fifty per cent jobs be reserved for backward classes—determined afresh on the basis of multiple criteria and the rest be filled on merit.

This consensus was reflected in our memorandum to the Gajendragadkar Commission which urged "a fresh determination of the list of backward classes, manageable in number and cutting across religious communities, on the basis of a multiple criteria of economic, social, educational and geographical status of a group of people". It also suggested that fifty per cent jobs be reserved for backward classes and the rest be filled on merit.

The Gajendragadkar Commission accepted our suggestions on the subject almost in toto. The State Government appointed a Backward Classes Committee, headed by Justice J.N. Wazir, to draw a new list of backward classes in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission. The State Government accepted the list recommended by the Wazir Committee and announced, through its two orders, issued in April and August,

1970, its new policy of fifty per cent reservation for backward classes in all recrultment and promotions.

The classification by the Wazir Committee, however, neither satisfied the backward classes nor the judicial scrutiny. A Seminar convened by me under the joint auspices of Institute of Jammu and Kashmir Affairs and All India Backward Classes Federation on 16 October 1971 rejected this classification. Attended by academicians, social workers, legislators, MP's and the Union and State ministers, expressed its satisfaction over the acceptance of the Gajendragadkar Commission of the recommendations of the earlier seminar with regard to the multiple criteria for determining backward classes and in rejecting religion as a basis of reservation. But it regretted that the criteria were not properly applied by the Wazir Committee. Later I also convened a one-day Convention of Backward Classes Federation on 16 April 1972 at Jammu to discuss, inter alia the report of the Committee. Attended by about 450 delegates from all over the State, the convention demanded scrapping of the list of backward classes prepared by the Wazir Committee as "it included high and prosperous castes but excluded some really backward classes." Moreover the list was so vague that the concerned officers could declare anybody backward "with the result that the certificates of backwardness are being openly traded." The Convention therefore urged the Government to prepare a new list for the purpose.

Loopholes in the List

As I described in an article "The list of Wazir Committee included residents of certain areas and those belonging to 62 professions and 19 castes. The backwardness of a person was judged by the status of his grandfather, which could not normally be easily verified and, in any case, should not always be relevant in determining the status of the person himself. Moreover, most of the occupations listed by the Wazir Committee were not traditional and could not only be changed from one generation to another but also in the lifetime of the same person. Again, some of the occupational groups included in the list, like religious workers and the priestly classes, could hardly be regarded as socially or educa-

tionally backward. No stigma was ever attached to them.

Though ostensibly the share of the backward classes in recruitment, promotion and admissions was increased to 50 per cent, most of this share was grabbed by the advanced classes in the list and by impostors who exploited the vagueness of the definition of backwardness."

Stressing the need for making this definition more rigorous, I wrote : "It would be too idealistic to expect the State to dispense with all other considerations except merit in selections for administrative posts and admissions to educational institutions. Neither is the total size of the cake so large that the needs of all can be satisfied. Nor is the population of the State so homogeneous that imbalances in the representation of the different sections in government jobs and in admissions should not matter."

I concluded : "three types of identities are competing for recognition—viz those based on religion, region and backwardness. The State has experimented with all three and found each one of them to be deficient in some aspect or the other. Thus the communal identity was found to be too inadequate to represent all the aspirations and needs of the members of a community. The Hindus of Jammu, for instance, discovered that they would not get their due share if their share was merged in the Hindu quota.....But even regional identity, which to some extent undermines the religious identity, cannot automatically ensure equitable distribution of all benefits among all the members of a region.

"While real satisfaction of articulated regional aspirations must be attempted at the political level, as far as services are concerned, a measure of decentralization and regionalisation might be helpful. Thus apart from the State cadre of services, a regional cadre might be created to deal with subjects of regional and local interest. In the recruitment to the regional cadres, knowledge of regional language may be considered an additional qualification. (The proposal for regional cadres was submitted to the Gajendragadkar Commission also which partially accepted it).

"From the point of constitutional requirements and secular and socialist principles and in the interest of the cohesion and

integrity of the State, the emphasis must shift towards recognition of the third type of identity i.e. based on backwardness. The list of backward classes prepared by the Wazir Committee needs to be drastically revised in the light of past experience and the pertinent observations of the Supreme Court. The new list should be more equitable and objectively verifiable. It should be subject to periodic reviews with a provision for gradual reduction in the number of persons covered by it.

"Within backward classes also, vested interests tend to emerge which monopolise the benefits granted to their members. In order to guard against this eventuality, a negative economic test should be applied in determining backwardness so that persons beyond a certain income in every backward class are debarred from getting any benefit reserved for backward classes" (*Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 July 1973).

The State has been without a list of backward classes since Supreme Court declared it illegal on 10 January 1973. The Government reverted back to the policy of distributing jobs and admissions on communal, regional and caste basis. As the policy was neither officially owned nor legally enforceable, it gave rise to many abuses.

Anand Committee

The State Government did appoint a Committee headed by Justice A.S. Anand to prepare afresh the list of backward classes. It submitted its report in September 1977. But it was neither accepted nor rejected by the Government.

The indecision may partly be due to the fact that it does not offer a viable alternative to communal and regional basis of recruitment followed so far.

The Anand Committee accepted the theoretical framework proposed by me not only in principle but in exactly the words used by me. Apart from making use of references and quotations reproduced by me in a paper on the subject, the Committee also reproduced verbatim passages from my paper read at an all India Seminar of Backward Classes Federation in 1967, a published copy of which was supplied to the Committee.

I would have been happier if the Committee had drawn

right and balanced conclusions from the spirit and logic of my basic ideas which seemed to have been accepted as the starting point of its report; albeit without acknowledgement.

The positive point of the report of the Committee are : (a) its acceptance of the secular criteria for determination of backward classes; (b) application of negative criteria for excluding certain sections of affluent people from the list of backward classes; (c) exclusion of some privileged communities included in the list of the Wazir Committee.

Discussing principle weaknesses of the report, I wrote on 12 December 1979 that too many complicated qualifications on sections within each class might make the whole policy unworkable.

The new categorisation of backward classes and the restrictions under which they could claim benefits according to the article, "drastically reduces the number of beneficiaries that had been recommended by the Wazir Committee. In fact if the report of the Anand Committee is seriously and strictly implemented, it would create an anamolous situation. For there would not be enough number of candidates and students to fill 50 per cent of jobs and admission opportunities reserved for them" (*INFA*).

The article adds:

"What is no less important is that the Committee should have disclosed how far each section of population listed by it in the backward classes satisfied the criteria of backwardness accepted by it. Each test could have been qualified and made objectively verifiable.

"Again, the list of backward area, the unit of which varies from a village to a district, is supposed to be based on a number of factors which go on changing rather rapidly. The criteria adopted by the Committee robs backward classes of their identity and a minimum stability.

"No doubt classification of backward people is a complex task. But if the problem has defied solution so far it is not merely on account of its complexity but also lack of political will.

"The prolonged and indefinite suspense over the issue is in no case justified. For the policy vacuum on it not only

aggravates controversy over claims and counter claims of various sections of people but is also the major alibi for uninhibited patronage and arbitrariness."

There is a broad consensus in the State on the basic principles of recruitment and admission policies. The problem is to give a practical shape to the objective of reconciling competing claims of merit, backwardness, regional and communal interests. The State Government was also committed to the redressal of imbalances which admittedly exist.

An easily verifiable list of backward classes and reservation of 50 per cent jobs for them (including the Scheduled Castes) regional and district cadrisation of services, to be recruited by autonomous and non-partisan agencies and objective criteria for determining merit are some of the essential pre-requisites of an equitable recruitment policy to accommodate diverse and increasing claims on limited opportunities. Policy for admissions to technical institutions can also be evolved on the basis of similar principles.

The policies should be periodically reviewed to provide for redressal of any glaring inequities that might accumulate. What is important is that they should be statutorily defined and supplemented by political measures, discussed elsewhere.

Developmental Imbalances

Another major cause and form of expression of regional tensions is the feeling of regional imbalances in the field of development. The Gajendragadkar Commission realized "how strongly Jammu nurses a feeling of being discriminated against in developmental matters." Though the Commission did not confirm that the discrimination was deliberate, the statistical and other data examined by it made it "fairly clear that the Kashmir region has on the whole received more attention than the other regions."

Contradicting the allegations of discrimination against Jammu made during the regional upsurge of 1978-79, a State Government brochure asserted that the removal of the traces of disparities wherever these might exist was the sheet anchor of the State policy at present. Releasing "facts and figures" it in fact sought to prove that Jammu and Ladakh have been

getting more than their due share during the Abdullah regime. The following figures present the official case :—

(In Lakhs of rupees)

Financial Year	*Due Outlay*			*Actual*		
	Jammu	*Kahsmir*	*Ladakh*	*Jammu*	*Kashmir*	*Ladakh*
1975-76	1725-77	2025.17	87.53	1812.59	1753.88	272.00
1976-77	2256.78	2618.30	114.45	2271.06	2308.47	360.00
1977-78	3217.80	3776.05	163.20	3102.83	3584.22	470.00
1978-79	4107.99	4820.68	208.30	4431.84	4012.99	692.14

The due share is calculated on the basis of population of the regions. Thus according to the official viewpoint Jammu received an allocation of Rs. 11,618 lakhs against its "due share of Rs. 11,308 lakhs during the first four years of the Abdullah Government.

These figures cannot be verified. But presuming them to be true I said, in my memorandum to the Sikri Commission ; "the State Government which argues that the Central grants be given on the basis of area and not population, strangely applied reverse logic in making allocations within the State."

Let it be conceded that it is not possible to achieve absolute regional parity in each sector of economy. For potentialities and needs of each region vary enormously. Jammu cannot for instance, compete with Kashmir in attracting the same number of tourists and pilgrims to Amarnath, shrine of Kashmir would always be a fraction of those to Vaishno Devi of Jammu. Similarly Kashmir cannot grudge the location in Jammu of the Salal hydel power project and the railway link with other parts of the country. Priorities in the two regions also cannot be the same. Tourist industry and handicrafts should clearly receive higher priority in the Valley, while provision of drinking water and communication links are of paramount importance in Jammu region.

Further in comparing levels of development in the three regions of the State, activities in public as well as private sectors should equally be taken into account. The public sector, again, is divided into the Central and the State components. The State divides its plan into the State and the district plans.

Balanced Growth

The objective of the State policy should be a balanced and equitable growth of all regions. For this purpose an overview of the progress of each region under all sectors of economy and all departments—Central and the State—must be taken into account. Attempt should be made not only to approximate per capita income of the regions but also per square mile of infra structure and welfare facilities. To avoid regional disputes over individual projects and items of expenditure, the allocation of funds should be made on a commonly accepted formula, based on objective factors as far as possible. The relevant factors for this purpose, according to the Gajendragadkar Commission, should be population, area, specific needs, potential resources of the region. To encourage local initiative and resource mobilisation, some sources of revenue might be reserved for the area from which they are collected.

For the success of such a formula, it is necessary to formulate plans at the regional level also. Not only because regional identity, the geographical, administrative and psychological dimensions of which are conceded, should find its expression in the economic field as well but also because some plans are of inter-district importance and can best be conceived and implemented at the regional level

Disparities Within Regions

The question of regional imbalances is closely linked with intra-regional imbalances. Some criteria should be applied for allocation of funds within regions also ; so that the needs of backward areas receive special attention. In this context it is pertinent to note, as I pointed out to the Sikri Commission that "the total plan outlay for the three hill districts of Jammu, namely Doda, Rajouri and Poonch, which also happen to be Muslim majority part of the region and the area of which far exceeds the entire Kashmir Valley, has been less than that of any single district of the Valley."

No less important is the need to eliminate inter-class disparities. The growing gap between the rich and the poor is as alarming as inter-regional and intra-regional disparities.

Whatever be the actual policy for reducing inter-regional,

intra-regional and inter-class imbalances, it is necessary to take people into confidence and in fact to involve them in evolving such a policy. The Gajendragadkar Commission, too, underlined the importance of "keeping the general population correctly and adequately informed of the progress of development programme and development expenditure" at State as well as regional levels.

Sense of Participation

Finally in determining the needs of the people—which we accepted as one of the relevant criteria for fixing development priorities—their own perception of the needs should receive no less weightage than the opinions of the experts and bureaucrats. This perception can obviously be expressed through political channels. Association of the people is, in fact, as vital for the formulation of the plans as their implementation. The Gajendragadkar Commission, therefore, considered "it important that the people of each region should have a feeling of equal participation in the integrated development of the State." It, therefore, visualized "an arrangement whereby the regions can have the maximum opportunity to draw up their own development programmes and to implement them subject to the interests of the State as a whole."

This again brings us back to the institutional and constitutional arrangements for equitable share of political power among the people of the three regions and within each one of them. Without it, let it be reiterated, an equitable regional share in the fields of development, recruitment and admissions is neither possible nor can it satisfy regional aspirations.

VIII

Schizophrenia in Jammu ?

A member of the Sikri Commission pertinently asked me when I appeared before it, as to why in spite of a formidable case and support of all Kashmiri leaders who mattered, Jammu did not succeed in getting its due status within the State. A part of the reason, I answered, was that most of the Kashmiri leaders had sympathised with the aspirations of Jammu only when they were out of power; which they were reluctant to share once they got it.

To be sure, it was only a part of the answer. The other part, perhaps more vital, relates to the weaknesses in the region itself. The discontent of the people has never been in doubt. They have also demonstrated a number of times, their capacity to protest and sacrifice a number of lives. But they lacked a unanimously articulated demand, a rallying forum or a personality and a focus of protest. Their energies have been frittered away on frivolous issues and in chasing illusory goals. They have been led from one illusion to another which diverted their attention from the realities of the situation.

Illusions

In 1947, illusion of a so-called independent Hindu State blinkered the dominant Hindu leadership of Jammu of that time from reading the writing on the wall at one of the most critical junctures in India's history. The delay in the State's accession to India not only damaged national interest, it also permanently undermined Jammu's position in the politics of the State.

In the second phase, protection for the interests of the majority community of Jammu was sought in the anachronistic institution of monarchy and the personality of the monarch. Some people clung to this illusion even after the abdication of the ruler in 1949 till hereditary rule was constitutionally abolished.

Again, slogans of zonal plebiscite and separation of Jammu were devices for escapism from reality which no government at the Centre that had national interest in mind could countenance.

The same leadership kept alive an illusion that the Jammu problem would be solved by abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. It, however, reconciled to the permanence of the constitutional provision for a special status of the State in 1977, having exhausted energies of the people for 25 years, having divided Jammu on communal lines and having caused international complications in the Kashmir problem.

As each illusion received a shattering blow, it affected the morale of the people. They have, in fact, been shuttling between desperation and helplessness. The lack of clarity and confidence on the part of leadership of Jammu is indicated by its pathetic faith in judicial Commissions of Inquiry.

The problem of Jammu is too serious to be left to, say, a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who is singularly unqualified by virtue of his limited training to appreciate intricate aspirations of the people. Essentially it is the job of political leadership to articulate the minds of the people and to find a widely acceptable solution at a political level. The job of experts is merely to work out technical details of such a solution.

It was this confusion about the task of a Commission—as also about the final solution of Jammu problem—that paralysed the will of the leaders who initiated negotiations with the State Chief Minister for ending the Jammu agitation in 1979-80. On account of similar confusion it took All-Party Jammu Committee about eight months to come to a minimum agreement about the constitutional and political remedies of the problem.

It is true that leaders of Kashmir have not kept up their

promises regarding the status of Jammu. But most vocal opposition to altering its status came from a section of Jammu's leadership. While national leaders like Nehru, Jayaprakash and even Shyamaprasad Mukerjee and all important Kashmiri leaders, including Sheikh Abdullah supported the concept of regional autonomy, it was opposed by Jana Sangh which claimed to be the champion of the interests of Jammu.

Unwilling Collaborators

Again, there might be much truth in the charge that the ruling leadership tried to divide Jammu on communal lines—as all rulers try to divide and rule. But here, too, the communal elements in Jammu's politics have helped the designs of the rulers; may be unwillingly.

Thus while the efforts of the ruling party to communalise the agitation of 1978-79 did not succeed, the same task was performed more effectively by a team of five MPS belonging to the former Jana Sangh faction, who after a tour of Rajouri and Poonch made baseless and sweeping charges against the Muslim community and thus sought to alienate it from the popular agitation. It was only after I and Ved Bhasin (the then General Secretary of the State Janata Party) disowned the statements of the MPs at public meetings and emphasized the secular character of the agitation that the Muslim community was soon back for it.

Similarly at the height of the regional autonomy movement in 1967 a communal explosion was sought to be created in Jammu which was averted by workers of the Peace Committee headed by me at the risk of our lives. Such instances can be multiplied.

Discussing the handicaps of Jammu, I wrote in an article in 1961 :

> To the extent Jammu depended upon Jana Sangh (Praja Parishad) for its ideological and organisational strength, its effective role in the politics of the State was reduced. What is worse, from the point of view of Jammu, is that the ideology and organisation, wedded to Hindu chauvinism of India, isolated the Dogra community from the rest of the

province by creating a psychological barrier, along the Chenab, more insurmountable than the physical barrier of the great river (*Kashmir Affairs*, No. 10, March-April 1961).

The chauvinistic movement in Jammu, I observed, "served the cause of Kashmiri irredentists by alienating the Muslim majority part of Jammu and driving them closer to their co-religionists across the Pir Panchal" (*Economic and Political Weekly*, February 1974).

Jana Sangh also made a formal proposal to the Delimitation Commission for dividing Jammu along communal lines and tagging its Muslim areas with Kashmir and Ladakh. Such attempts to break Jammu's personality and its secular character weakened its capacity to share political power on the basis of equality.

Further much energy of the people of Jammu has been spent on attacking the symptoms rather than basic causes of their malaise. Those who adopted a militant posture on the issue of re-opening of the Ayurvedic College in Jammu after compromising on the issue of constitutional safeguards for sharing of political power for the region (which would have included the power to open any number of such institutions) were only confused in their priorities but also betrayed a classical instance of impotent militancy.

I had alleged, in a public speech, that "Jana Sangh led Hindus of Jammu to a blind alley and having engaged them in futile struggles exhausted all their energies." I held it responsible, more than any body else, for creating "an atmosphere of frustration, defeatism and helplessness in Jammu" (*Kashmir Times*, 26 May, 1967).

Indeed if any party wanted to rule over Jammu without sharing power with its people, it would have tried to create a party like Jana Sangh had it not existed. I once accused the then Chief Minister Sadiq of trying to build up the Sangh in Jammu. He candidly admitted that it was a lesser evil than any secular opposition party. For Congress-Sangh polarisation involved conceding three or four seats to the Sangh (maximum it had ever won in Jammu of its own), and ensured the rest for the ruling party. If any secular opposition struck

roots among Hindus of Jammu, he argued, all seats would be in danger.

Thus "an important factor in the survival of Jana Sangh in Jammu was its utility to the ruling Kashmiri leadership." For this reason it "acquired a say in appointments, promotions and transfers of government employees of Jammu, in admission to technical institutions, and in the grant of permits and quotas, and all this sustained the party, the ranks of which were otherwise getting weary with being in political wilderness" (*Economic and Political Weekly* 1st September 1973).

Third Alternative

In my election manifesto in 1962, entitled *Third Alternative*, I described Jammu's weaknesses in two parts : "some inherent in the situation others born out of stupidity." The first category included geographical, religious, linguistic and caste divisions of Jammu which were in sharp contrast to the homogenity and compactness of the Valley. But man-made divisions aggravated the weaknesses of Jammu. It was on account of these weaknesses, I argued, that "despite many sacrifices, Jammu's struggle has been in vain."

> It has led to a sense of exhaustion among the political workers and to defeatism among the people. Defeatism is expressing itself in two ways. First is surrender to the present rulers and second is to seek vengeance of current humiliations in victories and aggressions of a century ago. The first way is a frank admission of defeat while the second is of escape. The two ways between them are tending to divide the politics of Jammu. But obviously none is capable of solving the problems of the present. Self-respect of Jammu and realities of the situation demand that it should now follow the third way. This is a way of seeking a relation of friendship and equality with Kashmir.
>
> (*Jammu—A Clue to Kashmir Tangle*).

Oscillating between moods of servility and hostility, surrender and confrontation, desperation and helplessness, a schizophrenic streak seems to run across the body politic of Jammu.

The emergence of Janata Party in 1977 did provide an

opportunity to the people of Jammu to evolve a unified personality within the framework of a composite State. In particular, it was a unique opportunity for Jana Sangh to outgrow its narrow urban Hindu base and integrate this base with the whole region.

But Janata's failure to project an integrated image within the State was as conspicuous, if not more, as at the national level. Moreover, the non-Jana Sangh factions of the party at the Centre seemed to concede Jammu as a sphere of influence of the Jana Sangh faction which further handicapped the local unit to evolve a composite and secular personality. The appointment of a former Jana Sangh leader Baldev Singh who had defeated the official Janata candidate in Lok Sabha poll, as the co-convener of the party in Jammu region and his statement that his main mission in Parliament was abrogation of Article 370 provided all the ammunition that Sheikh Abdullah needed to blast the credibility of the party among Muslims of the State. Later splits in the party at the national level further emasculated it in the State.

Formation of All Party Jammu Committee, in the wake of the Poonch agitation in 1978, was another valiant effort to provide a common forum to solve Jammu's problem. Its various vicissitudes have already been discussed. But it may again be mentioned in the present context that the gap between achievements in the field and at the negotiating table reflected lack of clear thinking and mutual trust in the leadership of the movement.

The Lok Sabha election of 1980 may partially be taken as an extension of the regional upsurge of the earlier year for it was mainly responsible for sweeping Karan Singh to victory in Udhampur constituency against Abdullah's Finance Minister D.D. Thakur, who was supported by Congress(I). The ruling National Conference had left the other constituency of the region namely Jammu-Poonch mainly because it did not have a credible candidate and organisational base there. Congress(I) candidate G.L. Dogra owed his success, at least partly, to the fact that he distanced himself and his election campaign from National Conference and projected his party, in a subtle way, as its only viable alternative.

Limitations of Leadership

The alienation of National Conference in Jammu was thus established beyond doubt. But "the elections further exposed limitations of Jammu's personality and leadership." That Karan Singh lost in five (Muslim majority) of fifteen assembly segments in his parliamentary constituency, winning with barely 53 per cent of the votes polled—the smallest margin of victory in the State—and that his writ did not run in the other constituency of Jammu where he campaigned for the Janata, reflects not so much on the quality of the tallest regional leader as sharp caste, religious and linguistic diversity in the region. For his caste Hindu image was a handicap in making a dent in the Muslim and Harijan vote banks of the ruling party. "Similarly in Jammu-Poonch, Congress(I), apart from netting traditional anti-Jana Sangh votes, also cashed on Brahmin backlash against the Rajput candidates of the Congress(U)-Janata alliance."

"Brahmin-Muslim-Harijan coalition thus represented no less a crucial segment of Jammu's personality than the alliance led by Karan Singh which got just 41 per cent of the votes polled in the two constituencies of Jammu region" (*Economic and Political Weekly*, 8 March 1980).

In order to better its status, it is neither possible nor necessary for Jammu to have a charismatic leader to represent all ideologies, communities and castes within the region. What can be done and should be done by its thinking people is to work out a real emotional integration of it on the basis of understanding and autonomy of all of its diverse ethnic constituents. Various cultural streams that comprise Jammu should add to its richness and strength. Further, while ideological differences cannot be obliterated, it should be possible for political leadership of the region to arrive at a minimum consensus about the appropriate constitutional status of the region within the State. In fact Kashmiri leadership should also be involved in a dialogue for evolving such a consensus.

For goodwill of all the regions is the best means of evolving and maintaining satisfactory relations. Moreover contradiction in the basic interests of the regions is more imaginary than real.

Kashmiri Personality

The idea of a federal set up in the State has already been favoured by practically every Kashmiri leader at one time or the other. Many Kashmiris still rightly believe that this alone can ensure not only a lasting emotional unity among the three regions but also the special status that the State enjoys. Moreover, they cannot fail to appreciate the fact that regional autonomy would provide opportunities for the growth of Kashmiri personality also which has centuries of tradition and which the people of the region have sought to preserve against heavy odds e.g. against threats posed by sentiments of Muslim solidarity and Indian chauvinists.

The irredentist claims made by some leaders on Muslim majority areas of Jammu and Ladakh are a direct threat, not only to the secular character of these regions but also to the distinct Kashmiri identity. The temptation to exploit internal contradictions in Jammu reflects a short-sighted interest of the power game of the ruling group and not of any region or community of the State.

In any case diversity of Jammu is no alibi for denying it its rightful place. Just as the State should not be deprived of its autonomy within India on account of its obvious diversity, similarly Jammu's case cannot be dismissed on this ground. All that the diversity of the region requires is the extension of federal principle within it also by devolution of power to district, block and panchayat levels.

ANNEXURE 'A'

A Working Paper on Composition, Functions and Powers of the Five Tier Internal Set up of Jammu and Kashmir State, for Jammu and Kashmir State People's Convention, 1968.

The following proposals regarding the internal set-up of the State aim at reconciling the twin objectives of strengthening the integrity of the State and ensuring maximum decentralisation of political power. In fact, the two objectives are mutually complementary. For as Shri Jayaprakash Narayan has argued, "devolution of power, so that the Centre has only as much of it as required to discharge its central function and all the rest is exercised by the lower organs, need not imply a weak Centre." He adds that a nation becomes far more cohesive and strong if the diverse groups making it have as much freedom and opportunity as possible to manage their affairs and preserve and develop their uniqueness."

Federalism and decentralization, as means for promoting integration and democratization of a society, have been advocated by many authorities which need not be quoted here. Two pertinent comments may, however, be recalled. Prof. K.P. Bracher, for instance observes (in Federal Polity) that "Federalism has created unity where none was possible under any other form of Government." Again, Sir Frederick Whyte, the first President of the Legislative Assembly of India, had said : "The strongest Federal Unions are those in which the local patriotism finds a comfortable place within the embrace of the larger national patriotism."

The following discussion on the structure of the five tiers is proposed to be started from below. Firstly because the principle of decentralisation demands that only those powers should

be assigned to the higher organs as cannot be properly dealt with at the lower level. Secondly while the powers and functions of the lower four tiers can be fully defined the residue may be left to the State to ensure sovereignty of the overall State and also because all the powers and the status of the State at this stage cannot be exactly defined.

Village—The Lowest Tier

While Panchayat is the lowest tier of the decentralisation system in our scheme of things, many States of India have statutorily provided for Gram Sabha, which is the general body of the village Panchayat and consists of all the eligible voters in its jurisdiction. The Gram Sabha is supposed to meet once or twice in a year to consider the annual statement of accounts, audit reports of the Gram Panchayat, the administrative report of the preceding year, the programme of work for the ensuing year, the taxation proposal and any other specific scheme of a developmental nature involving community service, voluntary labour etc.

Gram Sabha is recommended to provide a sense of direct participation to the people of a village in some affairs concerning them. The only argument against it, however, is that it rarely functions as an effective institution.

Village Panchayat

Village Panchayat, the executive body of a village, is generally entirely elected by all the adult voters of a village through a secret ballot, with or without rights of cooption of special interests like women, scheduled castes and cooperative society. The constituency may either be divided into geographical wards or Panches elected on the proportional representation system. The Sarpanches of Panchayat can be directly elected by all the voters or indirectly by the Panches.

Functions: The functions of the village Panchayat may include Municipal Administration, Cultural, Social and Developmental activities from sanitation, conservancy, crop experiments, promotion of cottage industries to the registration of births and deaths. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee recommended wider functions of the Panchayats and some States have

already passed legislation to that effect. The additional functions suggested for the Panchayat include supervision of primary schools, welfare activities, local communications and improvements in agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation etc.

There should be provision for authorising Panchayats to take up agency function on behalf of higher organs of the State. Collection of land revenue may also be assigned to village Panchayat.

Finance : The main sources of income of a Panchayat include a tax on property, cess on land revenue or rent, a tax on animals, vehicles and profession tax. The Panchayat would also receive grants from Block committees or higher bodies. In some states Panchayats are empowered to levy octroi, tax on shops, drainage fees, tax on market, Bazar and fairs.

Block

In many states block committees are called Panchayat Samities. In Assam it is known as Anchalak Panchayat. In Gujarat it is called a Taluka Panchayat.

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee recommended that the most important and basic tier of democratic decentralisation should be at the Block level. Maharashtra, however, experimented with making district as the main and effective tier. The functions and powers of the Block Committee would, therefore demand on which level the main responsibility is proposed to be centred.

The argument for a powerful Block Committee is that it offers an area large enough for functions which the village Panchayat cannot perform, and yet small enough to attract the interest and service of the residents. On the other hand, Maharashtra's argument in favour of a strong district committee is that an effective and independent leadership does not exist at a level below a district.

Constitution should naturally depend upon the role we have in view for the Block Committees. The Block Committee (Panchayat Samiti) generally consists of the Sarpanches of the Panchayats within its jurisdiction or of members elected indirectly by the Panches or directly elected members. In many

States Sarpanches are ex-officio members of the Block Panchayat. In case the Block level is not to be made the basic unit in the hierarchy of tiers, the members should be elected indirectly. Besides Sarpanches, each Panchayat may elect one more representative to the Block.

In some States members of the Zila Parishad, elected from the constituency within the block as also local MLAs and M.L.Cs are also members of the Block Committee, with or without the right to vote. The argument for associating members of the higher bodies is to ensure continuity and informed discussion at various levels. But the practice has been opposed by many experts on the ground that it overshadows and inhibits the growth of local leadership.

Functions: The Panchayat Samities (Block Committees) are entrusted with developmental functions on their own behalf or on behalf of higher bodies. Besides implementation of developmental schemes, they may also be charged with the preparation of developmental plans for the block. They may have specific executive responsibilities in fields like primary education, health, sanitation, and local communication. They may also have a right of supervision over the Panchayat and of scrutiny and/or sanctions of the village Panchayat.

Districts

The third tier in many States is mainly a coordinating agency of the Block Committees, except in Maharashtra.

Constitution: The Zila Parishad, the district level body as called in most of the states, generally consists of the representatives of the Panchayat Samities and some representatives of the weaker sections (women, schedule castes, etc). In some States besides MPs, MLAs and MLCs—with or without voting rights—and directly elected members are also on the Zila Parishad.

Besides making the presidents of the Block Committees ex-officio members of the district council, the Block Committees may be authorised to elect one more representative to sit on the district committee. In addition some members should be directly elected. The number of directly elected members may not be less than that of indirectly elected members.

Functions : Besides being a coordinating body, exercising general supervision over the working of the Block Committees, the Zila Parishad (district council) may also have specific executive functions in the establishment and maintenance of schools, say, at the high school level and development work. The district council may examine and approve budget of the Block Committees, distribute funds allotted to the district between blocks, coordinate and consolidate block plans, supervise the activities of the Block Committees and perform disciplinary functions in regard to the specific categoryof staff at district and lower levels. The subjects assigned to Zila Parishad in Maharashtra include, agriculture, animal husbandry, forests, social welfare, secondary education, medical and health, buildings and communications, minor irrigation, local industries, arts and emporia, cooperatives, community development, and rural housing.

Finances : The finances of the Zila Parishad mostly consist of the funds received from the Government in the form of grants and also the share in land revenue and other local cases and taxes. A share of land revenue upto 40 per cent of the sum collected from within the district may be assigned to the district council, to be further distributed among the blocks in a prescribed manner.

The district council may have a power to recruit certain category of staff to work at the district and lower level.

Units (Regions)

In each of the three units of the State there shall be an elected legislature and a council of ministers responsible to it.

The proposed re-organisation of Assam envisages an exclusive transfer of the following subjects to the autonomous state (unit), agriculture, forests, fisheries, education (including University Education), communication (other than highways important to the State) medical and public health, local bodies and cooperatives, land, mines and mineral development, medium and small industries, administration of Justice and Prisons.

The autonomous units shall have taxation power in respect of subjects assigned to it including land revenue, agricultural income tax, excise duty, taxes on mineral right, on goods and

passengers and entertainment. The autonomous region shall also share in sales tax collections.

The Governor of the State shall function in a dual capacity. For subjects in the State list, he shall act on the advice of the council of ministers of the whole State while in case of regional matters, he will act on the advice of the council of ministers of the autonomous region.

State

At the State level much structural changes are not needed except that the State level executive and legislature shall divest themselves of the responsibility and power regarding the subjects delegated to the units. All the residuary powers shall vest in the State. Provision may be made for further devolution of power as the administration at the lower tiers shows signs of maturity and responsibility. The State may have a bi-cameral legislature. The Upper House comprising of indirectly elected representatives of the unit legislatures and Panchayats, may specifically be entrusted with the task of promoting inter-regional understanding, resolution of inter-regional disputes and in general strengthening the integrity of the State. The Upper House may comprise of equal number of representatives from the three units. Any legislation intended to amend the constitution of the State, alter inter-regional relations or change in the overall status of the State, in particular, must be referred to the Upper House for its opinion.

Other Matters

(*a*) *Cadre* : There shall be three types of cadre, Government servants, state, unit and district, to be recruited through Service Selection Boards at the three levels. There shall be provision for inter-change of services from one cadre to the other.

(*b*) *High Court* : There shall be one High Court of the State with two benches to start with ; one at Jammu and the other at Srinagar. As and when the need arises, suitable provision may be made at a convenient place somewhere in the Frontier Illaqas.

Balraj Puri

ANNEXURE 'B'

Memorandum of Jammu Autonomy Forum to Gajendragadkar Commission

The following memorandum was submitted by the Jammu Autonomy Forum to the Gajendragadkar Commission appointed by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, in consultation with the Union Government, on 6 November 1967. Its terms of reference included: (i) to recommend measures necessary to give assurance that the resources available to the State Government are being shared equitably and also to convey a feeling of equal participation in the integrated development of the State; (ii) and (iii) to recommend measures for giving an equitable share in Government employment and to ensure an equitable distribution of the available resources regarding admissions to institutions of higher education and the schemes of assistance by way of scholarships and loans to the various regions and communities, having special regard to the claims of the Scheduled Castes and other economically and socially backward communities, classes and groups and (iv) to consider generally the causes that lead to irritations and tensions and to recommend remedial measures.

The draft memorandum was "debated and discussed at length in various parts of Jammu and among its various sections as also with leaders of other regions of the State." The formal authority for finalizing it was vested in a 15-member Committee, formed at a convention of the political workers of the region on 21 January 1968.

The Committee included the following : Shri Balraj Puri (President), Khwaja Ghulam Qadir Bandey (Poonch),

Dr. Karam Chand (Kathua), Shri Om Prakash Sharma, Advocate (Udhampur), Shri Bansi Lal Kohistani, MLA (Reasi), Said Ullah Nehru (Doda), Col. Baldev Singh Samyal, Sardar Rangil Singh, Qazi Feroze Din, Choudhary Noor Din Kataria, Sardar Bachan Singh Panchhi, Shri N.D. Nargis, Shri D.C. Parshant, Shri Ved Bhasin and Shri Amrit Malhotra.

The Committee submitted the memorandum to the Commission on 31 March 1968 and appeared before it on 24 August 1968.

ANNEXURE 'C'

Memorandum submitted to J and K Commission of Inquiry (Sikri Commissiom) by Balraj Puri

This memorandum may be treated as continuation of the memorandum submitted by me on behalf of the Jammu Autonomy Forum to the Gajendragadkar Commission in 1968 (copies of the original memorandum are enclosed). For most of the basic issues entrusted to the present Commission have already been dealt with by the earlier Commission and the arguments advanced before the latter need not be repeated.

The present commission should in fact start from where the previous commission ended, taking into full account the way it dealt with various view points it received, its major recommendations, extent of their implementation and reasons for their non-implementation. The fresh proposals should then be considered to meet the situation as it has developed by now.

In dealing with regional grievances, we should have a wider perspective and be guided by national considerations. Adopting this approach, the Jammu Autonomy Forum had prepared its memorandum after extensive consultations with not only leaders of all parties and walks of life of Jammu but also those of the Valley and Ladakh. "For the basic objective was not merely redress of regional grievances but also of eliminating inter-regional tensions." What was submitted was with a view to serving and reconciling the best interests of the three regions of the State and thus strengthening its integrity.

Coming to the causes of Jammu's discontent, the memorandum concluded that "basically it suffers from a feeling of being discriminated against and being less than equal".

Complaints over share in services, development and admissions, it added "reflect as well as contribute to the same feeling."

The Gajendragadkar Commission echoed this conclusion when it observed: "The main cause of irritation and tension is the feeling of political neglect and discrimination, real or imagined, from which certain regions of the State suffer."

While the Commission conceded the importance of satisfying political aspirations, as was stressed by the Autonomy Forum, its recommendations fell short of the latter's demand. We revert to this issue later. However on the matters pertaining to development allocations, recruitment and admission the Commission may profitably draw on the representation of the Forum and the report of the Gajendragadkar Commission on those matters as they form an important part of its terms of reference.

That merit alone is not the criterion of recruitment and admissions is generally admitted. But other criteria are not publicly defined. The selection committees are known to have been verbally directed by the Government to conform selections to a given communal proportion and certain other considerations. As these criteria are not constitutionally permissible, the device of interview marks is used to change the order of merit of the candidates. This adds a subjective element to the selection and creates scope for arbitrariness, nepotism and favouritism.

Recruitment policy of the State has officially taken cognizance of communal claims ever since the Glancy Commission pointed out, in 1931, inadequacy of the Muslim share in the services. The periodic release by the Government of figures of communal share in services merely confirms the fact that such claims were considered legitimate.

Apart from the dubious methods that have to be used in ensuring communal basis of selections, it hides many inequities. Firstly it conceals regional imbalances which are as much a source of tension as communal imbalances used to be. Regional-cum-communal breakdown of service personnel would, for instance, show that the share of Muslims of Jammu is woefully inadequate. Similarly claims of the vital ethnic identities like the Gujars do not get adequate attention.

Secondly merit as a whole as also within each community is also ignored. Thirdly the claims of backward sections of society are neglected.

In fact the Constitution permits reservation in jobs and admissions for educationally and socially backward classes, apart from the scheduled castes. If a certain community claims a larger share, than is due to it on merit, on the ground that it is backward, why should its backward sections not be identified as backward classes and be entitled for their share as such instead of the whole community claiming that share ?

"The Government of Jammu and Kashmir do not appear to be following any clearcut policy either in the classifications of backward classes or in the matter of special benefits to be given to them," observed the Gajendragadkar Commission. Whatever rules they made in this respect were subject to modification from time to time to suit a particular situation, it added.

The final list of backward classes that was adopted by the State Government in pursuance of the recommendation of the Gajendragadkar Commission was struck down as ultra vires of the Constitution by the Supreme Court in 1973 as it was vague, arbitrary and not easily definable. The State Government did set up a Committee headed by a High Court Judge, Mr. Justice Anand, to prepare the list of backward classes afresh. It submitted its report to the Government in 1977 which has neither been adopted nor rejected. The result is that there is a complete vacuum as far as policy towards backward classes is concerned as they have not been identified and recognized.

A major section of the population of the State, which according to the Gajendragadkar Commission should be 50 per cent of the total population has thus been deprived of their constitutional right for reservation in recruitment and admissions.

Even the Gujars, who are, after Kashmiris and Dogras, the third largest community of the State and are admittedly backward, have officially neither been declared backward nor a scheduled tribe. The State Government, no doubt, has often expressed sympathy and concern for the welfare of the community. What the Gujars get, they do so as a matter of favour and not as their due right. It not only hurts their self-respect

but causes avoidable jealousy among other communities against them.

The scheduled castes are also getting a raw deal. In spite of a statutory reservation of 8 per cent government jobs for them, there is no hope for reaching the target in the near future unless the Government makes special efforts to clear the past deficiency and scrupulously meets its constitutional obligation.

Much of the communal and regional controversies over share in jobs and admissions would be cut to size if fifty per cent vacancies are reserved purely on merit and for the rest a rational and well defined publicly stated policy of reservation is announced which is legally enforceable and is subject to judicial review; independent of the subjective interests and arbitrary powers of the political leadership.

In the field of development, the Gajendragadkar Commission came to a clear conclusion, after examining the statistical and other datas that "Kashmir region has on the whole received more attention than the other regions" (p. 42).

In countering this statement as well as the charge of regional discrimination made by leaders of Jammu and Ladakh, the State government periodically releases the figures of yearly development allocations to each region to show that the share of Jammu and Ladakh is much larger than their per capita entitlement (*If Regional imbalance ? let facts speak*, printed by Government of Jammu and Kashmir Department of Information, January, 1979).

The State Government which argues that Central grants be given on the basis of area and not population strangely applies reverse logic in making allocations within the State. The Gajendragadkar Commission had therefore rightly suggested that factors such as population, area, specific needs, potential available etc. should be taken into account in judging the share of resources for each region. In particular the needs of backward areas should be kept in view. In this context it is pertinent to point out that the total Plan outlay for the three hilly districts of Jammu namely, Doda, Rajouri and Poonch—which also happen to be Muslim majority districts and the area of which far exceeds the entire Kashmir valley—has been less than that of any single district of the Valley.

Irrespective of the criteria for regional allocations, the Gajendragadkar Commission felt it to be equally "important that the people of such region should have a feeling of equal participation in the integrated development of the State." For it had realised "how strongly Jammu nurses a feeling of being discriminated against in development matter." The Commission warned against ignoring "this feeling of dissatisfaction," even if it was partly psychological.

The terms of reference of the present Commission also underline a permanent need to bring about a sense of satisfaction in the development efforts among the people living in the different regions as well as within district administrative units thereof.

The Gajendragadkar Commission, therefore, visualized an arrangement whereby "the regions can have the maximum opportunity to draw up their own development programme and to implement them subject to the interest of the State as a whole".

Accordingly it suggested statutory development boards at the State and regional levels consisting of legislators, economists, experts and concerned officials.

This recommendation, though accepted in theory, was never implemented. Regional Boards which were set up never functioned.

Again as late as in December, 1978 in the wake of the Jammu agitation the State Government announced its decision "to set up regional development boards for Jammu and Kashmir respectively" (*Statesman* 12 December 1978). Later the Government seemed to have second thoughts and quietly withdrew this decision.

As Regional Boards were intended to provide a sense of participation to the people of each region and had basically to be of political character, the question is linked with the political aspirations of the people, referred to in the beginning of this Note. In fact the Gajendragadkar Commission specifically conceded that "even if all matters were equitably settled, we feel that there would still be a measure of discontent unless the political aspirations of the different regions were satisfied."

The Commission had not suggested Regional Boards as an

adequate answer to the need for satisfaction of regional aspirations. It had added suggestions regarding composition of the Cabinet. It suggested two conventions for this objective. Firstly "if the Chief Minister belongs to one region, there should be a Deputy Chief Minister belonging to the other region." Secondly "the number of Cabinet Ministers belonging to the two regions should be equal."

These conventions have not been followed. In any case they are of extremely limited value. For the presumption underlying them is that the ruling party has a uniform base throughout the State. Otherwise what satisfaction can the people of Jammu draw if the ruling party, most of the candidates of which lost their security deposits in the last assembly election, nominated some non-entities or unpopular leaders to increase the regional quota in the cabinet and make one of them as the Deputy Chief Minister ?

The only other political remedy that the Commission considered was in its own words "elaborately and ably presented" by the delegation of the Jammu Autonomy Forum. It theoretically conceded that the satisfaction of their (Jammu's) legitimate expectation in good time may lead to greater consolidation of the region with the rest of the State.

However, the Commission rejected the demand for regional autonomy on two counts. Firstly it doubted if the proposal "represents the aspirations of a large majority of population of the Jammu region." Secondly it feared that the acceptance of the demand "would make an adverse impact on the minds of the residents of Kashmir region."

The Commission should have passed its judgement on the merit of the proposal and not entered into the exercise of making an assessment of popular support for it. This was beyond the competence and means of the Commission.

Anyhow an effective reply to its objections was soon available.

Jammu and Kashmir State Peoples Convention, convened by Sheikh Abdullah in 1968, which represented almost the entire spectrum of public opinion in the Valley, finally adopted a five tier internal constitutional set up for the State, exactly on the lines proposed by the memorandum of the Jammu Autonomy.

It envisaged maximum autonomy for the three regions of the State, subject to its unity and further devolution of power at district, block and panchayat levels.

At the time of signing the Kashmir accord of 1975, between the Prime Minister of India and Sheikh Abdullah, the question of inter-regional relations was again raised. The then Prime Minister in her speech in the Lok Sabha on 3rd March, 1975 expressed her deep "concern with the development of the two regions of Jammu and Ladakh" and conveyed to Sheikh Abdullah "the anxieties and difficulties of these regions."

The Sheikh had convened a convention of representatives of Jammu and Ladakh in August 1974 at Srinagar to allay their anxieties. He sought their cooperation on the basis of regional autonomy. After coming to power the Sheikh reiterated his commitment a number of times. The revived National Conference under his leadership, in a policy statement in 1976, proposed "to re-organize constitutional set up of the State which would provide regional autonomy and further decentralize political power."

As far as Jammu region is concerned, the executive committee of the Janata Party (Jammu region) demanded "constitutional provisions for a equitable share of political power among the three regions and its further decentralisation on democratic lines at district, block and panchayat levels—to remove tensions and imbalances between and within regions, to strengthen secular basis of the State, to ensure sense of participation to the people in democratic process and to speed up economic development."

Finally the All Party Jammu Committee, which spearheaded the agitation in Jammu in the winter of 1978-79 demanded "a statutory political and democratic set up at regional, district, block and panchayat levels."

While there is no unanimity on the quantum of autonomy needed at various administrative tiers, the case for devolution of power, in principle, has been conceded by all parties at one time or the other. The principle is also in accordance with the basic concept of democratic decentralization.

The idea of regional autonomy and its historical background have been elaborately explained in the original

memorandum of 1968 which also quotes categorical support for it of leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee and Jayaprakash Narayan besides of Kashmiri leadership including Sheikh Abdullah. What adds to the justification of the idea is the fact that controversy over the status of the State has been finally resolved. After finality of Article 370 of the Constitution, guaranteeing a special status to the State, has been conceded by its opponents, there is no reason why its logic should not be extended to the State-region relations. Whatever power the State gets from the Centre should be equally shared by its three regions. If, as is argued, autonomy of the State, under article 370 has strengthened its emotional integration with the rest of the country, similar autonomy to the regions would strengthen emotional integration of the regions of the State with each other. A dose of federalism, which has demonstrated its integrating potentialites in the country as a whole, would have a similarly integrating effect on a State like Jammu and Kashmir. For as John Fischer observes "federalism aims to harmonize the diverse interest of widely various cultures, traditions, economies, races and religions into a framework which will serve their common needs."

While the idea of regional autonomy has been discussed elaborately in the original and present memorandum, no rigid position is being taken on its actual framework. For it must be evolved with the goodwill and consent of leaders of all regions and communities as also of distinct areas and cultures within each region.

The memorandum avoids cataloguing all the grievances and problems of the region. For it seeks structural changes in the system so that peculiarly regional problems can be dealt with through regional institutions empowered to do so without causing undue tensions in other regions. The five tier set up from State to Panchayat level is suggested to increase the share of people in the exercise of power at various levels and thus add to their own problems. The basic objective is not only to democratise the system but also ensure that the people of all regions and areas within each region have a feeling of equality and none is dominated by the other. [Jammu 20-9-1979]

ANNEXURE 'D'

Summary of Recommendations of Gajendragadkar Commission.

Development Programmes :

1. There should be a statutory State Development Board and statutory Regional Development Boards for the three regions—Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The Regional Boards should be headed by the Chief Minister or the Planning Minister and should consist of legislatures from the regions, economists, experts and concerned officials. The regions should be adequately represented on the State Development Board which should be headed by the Chief Minister.

The functions of the Regional Development Boards will be :

(a) to draw up the regional Plans ;

(b) to assign priority to schemes and projects included in the regional Plans ; and

(c) to supervise the implementation of the regional Plans.

In discharging these functions it should be the special responsibility of the Regional Development Boards to pay due regard to the special needs of the backward areas of their respective regions.

The State Development Board will scrutinize the regional Plans, prepare a residuary Plan of schemes and projects which transcend regional boundaries or happen to be of an all-State interest and allocate Plan funds equitably (after taking into account the population, area and the specific needs of each region) to the regional Plans and the residuary Plan of all-State interest. (paragraphs 4.26 to 4.28)

2. The State Development Board and each of the Regional Development Boards will prepare at the end of each year a

report of their respective activities giving details of the progress of the Plan programmes and Plan expenditure. At the end of each plan, similar detailed reports should be prepared by the Boards indicating the physical and financial targets and the physical and financial achievements. All these reports should be laid before the Legislature as soon as may be after they are prepared.

Recruitment Policies :

3. Recruitment rules for all the State services for which they do not exist at present should be framed and promulgated as early as possible. Recruitment rules for other services also should be speedily framed. (paragraph 5.17)

4. Complete, tabulated results of all competitive examinations held by the Public Service Commission and any other Recruitment Board that may be set up, should be published. These results should be sent to all candidates who have taken the examination or, if this is not always feasible, the results should at least be made available for scrutiny on request. (paragraph 5.18)

5. Seniority lists for all services should be drawn up correctly and maintained up-to-date. (paragraph 5.19)

6. The annual confidential reports of all Government servants should be written up regularly and objectively and maintained properly. There should be provision for the review of the confidential rolls by an authority superior to the reporting officer. A proper procedure should be prescribed for dealing with representations of Government servants against adverse entries in their confidential rolls. (paragraph 5.20)

7. The following multiple criteria should be adopted for determining which classes should be treated as backward :—

1. The economic backwardness of the class.
2. The occupation or occupations pursued by that class of citizens.
3. Their place of habitation.
4. The average of student population per thousand in that class.

5. Caste, in relation to Hindus.

(paragraph 5.33 & 5.34)

8. The existing list of backward classes should be revised and a fresh list drawn up by a high powered committee after applying the economic backwardness. (paragraph 5.35)

9. Article 335 of the Constitution of India should be made applicable to the Jammu and Kashmir State and reservation for the Scheduled Castes made in the services in proportion to their population. (paragraph 5.38 & 5.39)

10. Reservation in the services should also be made for the backward classes, as freshly determined, in proportion to their population, subject, however, to the condition that the total reservation for the backward classes and the Scheduled Castes should not ordinarily exceed fifty per cent. The balance of the posts should be filled strictly and solely on the basis of merit. In filling the posts reserved for the backward classes and the Scheduled Castes, persons belonging to each of these categories should be selected on the basis of merit.

Educational Policies

11. Reservation of places in educational and professional institutions should be made for the backward classes and the Scheduled Castes in proportion to their respective population, subject to the condition that the total reservation does not ordinarily exceed fifty per cent. The balance of the places in such institutions should be filled strictly and solely on the basis of merit. In filling the places reserved for the backward classes and those reserved for the Scheduled Castes, merit should be the criterian for selecting the persons in each of these categories. (paragraph 6.18)

12. A certain proportion of the provision available for the grant of scholarships and study loans should be set apart for the backward classes and the Scheduled Castes. The provision should be separate for each of them and should not be less than the proportion that either of them bears to the population of the State. (paragraph 6.20)

13. The balance of the provision for the grant of scholarships and study loans should be made available to the rest of the student population. In giving scholarships or loans, the

means of the parent or guardian should be an important factor for determining the eligibility of the applicant and other things beings equal, merit should be the sole criterion for granting them. (paragraph 5.20)

Irritations and Tensions :

14. The Government and the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir may themselves decide when Article 370 of the Constitution of India should be abrogated. (paragraph 7.16)

15. The State Government should immediately take all steps to arrange for the holding of elections to the local bodies as early as possible. These elections should be held regularly in future. (paragraph 7.18)

16. A convention should be established that if the Chief Minister belongs to one region, there should be a Deputy Chief Minister belonging the other region. By another convention, the number of Cabinet Ministers belonging to the two regions should be equal. There should also be a full-fledged Cabinet Minister belonging to Ladakh. (paragraph 7.30)

17. The functions of each Head of Department should be divided on regional basis ; in other words each Department should have a Head and Additional Head, one of them functioning in one region and the other in the other region. The Department will be under the overall control of the main head who will also be responsible for the coordination of work between him and Additional Head. (paragraph 7.31)

18. When the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir functions at Srinagar, there should be at least one High Court Judge stationed at Jammu to dispose of the cases there. Similarly when the High Court is functioning at Jammu, there should be at least one High Court Judge stationed at Srinagar to deal with the cases arising in Kashmir. (paragraph 7.32)

19. Some of the cadres should be district-based, certain others region based and the balance State based. In district-based cadres transfers should be permissible only within the district and in region-based cadres transfers should be permissible only within the region. Members of State-based cadres alone should be transferable anywhere within the State. Generally speaking, the incumbents of inferior and non-

gazetted (other than supervisory) posts should be district-based. Supervisory non-gazetted posts, both clerical and non-clerical, should belong to the regional cadres. Class III and Class IV gazetted posts should also generally be in the regional cadres. The residents of the entire State shall be eligible for appointment to the posts included in any of these cadres. (paragraph 7.33)

20. The incumbent of a district-based post on promotion to a post in the regional cadre will become transferable anywhere within the region. Similarly, a person on promotion from a post in a regional cadre to a post in an all-State cadre will become liable to transfer to a place anywhere in the State. (paragraph 7.34)

21. Members of the Kashmir Administrative Service, the Kashmir Civil Service (Judicial) the Kashmir Police Service and such other State services as the State Govt. may consider necessary, shall be liable to serve for a minimum specified period (say, 5 years in each of the three regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh). (paragraph 7.35)

22. A Regional Recruitment Board should be set up for each of the Jammu and Kashmir regions and a District Recruitment Board for each district in the State including Ladakh. The function of the Regional Recruitment Board will be to make recruitment to the regional cadres, and that of the District Recruitment Boards to make recruitment to the district cadres. These Boards will concern themselves with filling those posts which are outside the purview of the Public Service Commission. These Boards could function part-time and be manned by suitable officers drawn from the regions or districts as the case may be.

23. There should be a separate full-fledged university in both the Jammu and Kashmir regions. One of them, preferably the one in Jammu, should immediately start a Faculty of Law. Subsequently, law classes will also have to be started in the other university. (paragraph 7.36)

24. As all the professional colleges are located in Kashmir (the Agricultural College at Ranbirsinghpura also having been closed down recently) it will be proper to open a new medical college at Jammu. The question of starting an engineering

college in the Jammu region may also be considered when the need for turning out a larger number of engineering graduates is felt. (paragraph 7.38)

25. The State Government should review the entire policy of food grain prices, both for procurement and for issue, and introduce uniform prices for foodgrains throughout the Jammu and Kashmir regions. (paragraph 7.40)

26. The quantum of rations issued to Srinagar and Jammu should be the same. (paragraph 7.41)

27. In the matter of rations issued to Government servants in the Ladakh District, no distinction should be made between 'locals' and 'non-locals'; if, however, non-locals want to take the whole or part of the rice ration in the form of wheat Atta, this should be permitted. (paragraph 7.42)

28. Some supplementary rationing of foodgrains should be introduced at Leh and Kargil on a basis similar to that adopted for the towns of the Jammu and Kashmir regions other than the cities of Srinagar and Jammu. (paragraph 7.43)

29. The system of collection of tolls and the location of the toll barriers in the State should be re-examined and rationalised so that neither the Jammu region nor the Kashmir region is placed at a disadvantage compared to the other. (paragraph 7.44)

30. A degree college should be established immediately at Leh. Subsequently, a second college should be established at Kargil. (paragraph 7.46)

31. The transport facilities available to Ladakh should be improved. In particular the number of buses and trucks plying between Srinagar and Leh should be substantially increased and transport facilities made available for access to the interior places in Ladakh. (paragraph 7.46)

32. Suitable arrangements should be made for the stay at Kargil of persons travelling between Leh and Srinagar. (paragraph 7.46)

33. Stable and satisfactory arrangements for providing electricity to Leh and Kargil and other places of importance in Ladakh should be made. (paragraph 7.46)

34. The single-line administration which was introduced

in Ladakh some time ago should be revived in its entirety. The post of Development Commissioner should be merged with that of the Dy. Commissioner and the incumbent of the post should function as the Head of all Departments in Ladakh and the Ladakh Affairs Secretary should be the Secretary for all subjects so far as Ladakh is concerned. He should work under the Ladakhi Minister who could hold charge of the portfolio of Ladakh Affairs. (paragraph 7.46)

35. The status of Leh should be accorded due recognition as the headquarters of a vast region by the construction of suitable buildings and roads, improving sanitary arrangements and other such measures. (paragraph 7.46)

36. The sanctioning of roads, irrigation and hydel schemes for Ladakh entails much delay as they have to pass through several stages both in the State Government and in the Central Government. As the passage through these different stages is unavoidable, all the authorities concerned in the State and Central Government should be instructed to deal as expeditiously as possible with the schemes relating to Ladakh. (paragraph 7.48)

37. The State Government should consider the request of the people of Ladakh for giving 'Ladakh' its due place in the formal name of the State. (paragraph 7.48)

38. There are some obvious anomalies in the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act and the Tenancy Act. The Wazir Committee had in 1953 made certain recommendations for dealing with some of them. The Land Commission appointed in 1963 has recently submitted its report. The State Government should consider the recommendations of the Wazir Committee and the Land Commission and take action to remove the anomalies, wherever possible. (paragraph 7.52)

39. The notification staying the disposal of applications made by the land-holders on grounds of resumption for personal cultivation should be rescinded, the Act under which notification has been issued be repealed and all pending applications for ejectment should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible. (paragraph 7.53)

40. The outstanding problems of refugees from non-liberated areas of the Jammu and Kashmir State should be

examined sympathetically so that their apprehensions may be allayed. (paragraph 7.55)

41. Fresh appointments to posts should, as a rule, be made only on the recommendation of the Public Service Commission or the Regional/District Recruitment Boards and the tendency to make ad hoc appointments against newly created posts should be discouraged. (paragraph 7.58)

42. Regular meetings of the Departmental Promotion Committees, presided over by a Member of the Public Service Commission, should be held so that panels of officers eligible for promotion to posts within the purview of the Commission are always available. Ad hoc promotions pending the approval of the Public Service Commission should be avoided. The Departmental Promotion Committees should invariably have a representative of the Service Department as a member. (paragraph 7.59)

Before we conclude we wish to express our sense of appreciation for the very valuable assistance given to us by Mr. B.P. Bagchi, the Secretary of the Commission, in organizing the work of the Commission and drafting the Report. We also wish to express our appreciation for the meritorious work done by the officers of the Commission, particularly Mr. R. Subrahmanian, who was of great help to the Secretary in the drafting of the Report. We also wish to thank the staff of the Commission for their help and cooperation.

P. B. Gajendragadkar
Chairman
Shankar Prasada
Member
Badr-ud-Din Tyabji
Member.

(B.P. Bagchi)
Secretary
Bombay :
November 29, 1968.

ANNEXURE 'E'

Report of Sikri Commission: Summary of Recommendations

In pursuance of its agreement with the All Party Jammu Committee, which spear-headed four-month long agitation in Jammu from December 1978 to March 1979, for constitutional and institutional changes to ensure an equitable distribution of political power among the three main regions of the State, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir set up a Commission of Inquiry on 2 June 1979. Headed by Justice S.M. Sikri, Retired Chief Justice of India, it included Dr. Malcolm S, Adiseshia (Member) and Dr. Z.M. Zaheer (Member-Secretary). The Commission submitted its report to the Government on 25 August 1980 which released it in November.

The Commission declined to consider the question of constitutional changes to satisfy political aspirations of the regions as it was, in its view, beyond its brief. Its major recommendations are as under :—

1. A State Development Board be set up with the Chief Minister as Chairman with some members of the legislature as members.
2. A formula for financial allocation to the regions be devised taking into account their population, area, backwardness and natural resources.
3. Working of the Public Service Commission and Recruitment Boards be improved and recruitment should be on merit, without any reservation on the basis of community, region or district.
4. Viva Voce system in admissions to professional institutions be scrapped and merit at written examination should alone be considered.

The following is the official summary of the recommendations released by the Commission :

Development Policies, Programmes and Implementation :

1. In order to study and correct development imbalance, it is recommended that the Government compile figures of per capita income at current prices by regions, and district administrative units and undertake studies which will indicate per capita expenditure by fractile distribution of the population in the State, region and district administrative units, using as appropriate, the surveys that National Sample Survey and Reserve Bank of India undertake.

2. Data in respect of the number of under-employed and un-employed persons and not only of the educated unemployed should be compiled periodically by regions and districts in order that the employment generation programme may be related to regional and district development activities.

3. Decline in the area under cultivation in Doda, and shortfall in per hectare yield in the districts of Udhampur, Kathua, Baramulla need investigation and correction of imbalances in the backward areas on the lines proposed by the multi-disciplinary teams.

4. Expenditure on Soil Conservation in the districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Doda which are backward is low and needs to be stepped up.

5. The decline in live-stock population as compared to inhabitants in Poonch, Rajouri, Leh and Kargil needs investigation.

6. Data in respect of the value of animal husbandry products should be collected by districts and compiled by regions and State as part of the function of the Statistical organisation.

7. The disparity in expenditure on forestry development as between the regions needs the attention of the Government.

8. Imbalance is reflected in the low expenditure on irrigation in the Kashmir region, in the backward areas of Poonch, Rajouri, Doda and the Mahore area of Udhampur. Baramulla also demands special attention as its percentage of

net irrigated area to net sown area is well below the regional average.

9. There is need for increasing power investment programmes in Ladakh and for accelerating the competition of Stakna and Suru Projects. The installed capacity also needs to be increased in Doda, Poonch and Rajouri.

10. Availability of power in the region of Ladakh needs augmentation and village electrification in Rajouri and Doda needs further investment.

11. The recommendations of the report of the Development Review Committee part IV in respect of the location of specific projects may be given attention.

12. Setting up of small industrial units in Ladakh needs attention.

13. Infrastructure for small scale industrial units needs to be developed in Doda, Rajouri and Poonch which suffer from serious imbalance in this respect.

14. Improvement needs to be made in the production performance of small scale industrial units in sheds in the Kashmir region.

15. Data of the percentage of average monthly attendance in schools should be collected, as the enrolment figures do not adequately show progress or regression on account of the high drop-out rates in the early years of primary education.

16. Drinking water facilities in Ladakh region and the districts of Rajouri, Doda, Poonch and Udhampur need attention and improvement.

17. Attention is needed for setting up housing colonies in Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Kupwara and Ladakh region.

18. Roads in Ladakh need to be developed.

19. Road links to Doda, and to Kishtwar and Bhaderwah need to be improved and developed on the lines of the main road between Jammu and Srinagar.

20. Improvement needs to be made in the roads from Jammu to Rajouri and Poonch.

21. Independent road links suitable for automobile traffic needs to be established between the capital on the one hand and Rajouri and Poonch on one side and Doda on the other.

22. Roads to backward areas need to be improved,

23. Programmes and projects for correction of imbalance as between districts and in backward areas already identified should be incorporated in the State Plan documents.

24. The monitoring of project execution and data collection and processing by the State Government at the State level should be part of the development policy.

25. The additional allocation made for backward areas must be spent exclusively on these areas and not diverted either to the common pool of the region or to other areas.

26. The imbalance favouring Leh against Kargil needs correction.

27. Abiana rates may be worked out afresh and if necessary modified.

28. The proposal to construct a tunnel under Zojila may be considered by the State Government and Government of India keeping in view the financial commitments involved and other relevant strategic issues.

29. In the case of Ladakh and other areas with short working season, the allotment of funds should be made on a two years basis.

Recruitment Policies :

30. The Commission do not support the claim that reservation in services for Scheduled Caste candidates should be made by districts, it should be on the basis of population for the State as a whole.

31. The trend of improvement in representation in services of the residents of Jammu region may be kept up consistent with the maintenance of efficiency in administration.

32. Statistics showing representation of each district in the different classes of Goverment service need to be compiled and maintained.

33. For all posts in Class 4 at the district and divisional level, recruitment should be made as far as possible from amongst local candidates only.

34. Promising students from rural areas may be picked up and groomed for competition with others for entry into Govt. services in the Public interest and also in order to provide better representation from rural areas.

35. Government and recruitment agencies may make efforts to accelerate the entry of Scheduled Caste candidates in Government services in order to reach reservation levels.

36. Government and the State Public Service Commission may review the proportion between total marks and viva-voce marks in the background of the practice followed in other States.

37. Government may not encroach on the sphere of activity entrusted to the Public Service Commission unless absolutely unavoidable in which case it should give its reasons in writing.

38. There should be no interference in the functioning of the district and divisional recruitment boards.

Admission to Professional Institutions :

39. Intake in polytechnics should be regulated in accordance with the number fixed in relation to availability of staff, equipment and other material facilities; in case of its being substantially below the fixed level, waste occurs, if it is too high it would lower the share in academic resource.

40. Statistics of admission should be compiled by districts of residence in order to remove imbalance if any.

41. Scales at which loans are granted should be reviewed from time to time and revised suitably in keeping with the fluctuations in the cost of living index.

42. The best five students at middle school level be selected from every Tehsil each year and given special attention by being admitted to the best school and by being fully supported in subsequent education so that when the time comes they can compete at an equal level with students from metropolitan areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

43. The viva-voce test for admission into professional institutions should be done away with.

44. Admission to medical colleges should be made on the basis of an admission examination to be conducted for both colleges jointly.

45. Admission to Polytechnics, Agriculture College and Regional Engineering College should be made solely on the basis of the marks obtained at the qualifying examination which is conducted by a Common Board for the entire State

Grievances and Relevant Issues

46. A State Development Board may be set up composed of the Chief Minister as Chairman and some members of the State Legislature as members and may be entrusted with supervision over the working of District Development Boards, formulation of allocation of funds for developmental expenditure, ensuring selection of meritorious boys and girls for special educational facilities and to report annually to the legislature on the working of the District Development Boards.

ANNEXURE 'F'

Intellectual Meet on Regional Relations in J&K

The following is a report of a seminar on inter-connection between Indian federalisation process and inter-regional relations in J&K State held at Jammu on 3, 4 and 5 January 1983:

Two issues have dominated the politics of Jammu and Kashmir State ever since independence; its relations—constitutional and political—with the rest of the country and mutual relations of its three broad regions. Both have been closely inter-connected. Each influenced and has been influenced by the other.

However, these issues have somehow remained tabooed. A frank and intelligent debate on them has never been encouraged. To acknowledge at any stage that Kashmir's affinity with the national identity had weakened was considered less than patriotic. And a discussion on causes and remedies of regional tensions was treated as an attack on the integrity of the State. The only forum where the issues always remained alive was the streets.

A recent seminar at Jammu, organised by the Institute of J&K Affairs, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Social Science Research on "Inter-connection between Indian federalisation process and inter-regional relations in J&K State" was almost the first serious attempt to bring out the problem from under the carpet. Fifteen papers read in the seminar by intellectuals of different regions of the State and outside thrashed various vexed and touchy aspects of it without inhibitions and tensions. Prof. Satya Bhushan, who presided over the inaugural session, commended the effort to bring the

problem from the streets to an academic forum. The participants were pleasantly surprised to find that it became so tractable that it was difficult to disagree.

Prof. Surinder Suri and Prof. K.R. Bombwal provided the theoretical framework for the issues of the seminar. The former argued that consciousness of national and regional identities grows simultaneously. The main issue today, he said, "is to articulate and develop the dynamic dialectical concept of national integration." In this context it was easy to realize that there was no contradiction between Kashmiri identity, Muslim identity—and for that matter other similar identities—and Indian identity. The State's special constitutional status also made sense in the context of Prof. Bombwal's concept of a flexible and asymmetrical federalism which alone ensured unity in a wide and diverse country like India.

Dr. Santosh Kaul explained that Article 370 of the Constitution did not abridge the central authority in J&K State in a qualitatively different manner than in other States. Prof. Abdul Ahad held that the special constitutional status of the State was necessitated by historical forces. From Mughal times, Kashmir had insisted on and been accorded a degree of autonomy by central authorities, he said. Prof. Riaz Punjabi dwelt on the socio-economic justification of Article 370. There was a general appreciation in the seminar of the role of the Article in forging emotional bridges between Kashmir and the rest of the country.

If federalism promoted unity in the country, why not use the same drug to evolve a composite and integrated personality of the State ? In fact, as Dr. Santosh Kaul pointed out "the prospects of Indian federalisation in a complex State of Jammu and Kashmir are closely linked with the manner and extent to which it is internally federalised." Endorsing the same point Prof. Abdul Ahad argued, "Just as forced constitutional integration of the State with the Indian Union alienated the people of Kashmir, similarly unitary form of constitution of the State is the principle cause of the regional tensions." Mr. S.L. Yachu, in the same vein, pleaded for "some constitutional and institutional mechanism to satisfy legitimate urge for share in power by the three regions of the State."

Khawaja Mubarak Shah, a Kashmiri MP who died recently, in his posthumous paper specifically dealt with the problem of the Jammu region He had no doubt about "widespread dissatisfaction and feeling among the people of Jammu that they are being discriminated against and neglected." In his view "trouble lies in the non-recognition of Jammu as an entity." He rejected the thesis that recognition of political and constitutional entity of the region would lead to separatist tendencies. He recalled that in 1951 and 1952, there was a move to give to Jammu some sort of constitutional status but the Praja Parishad agitation in the region for full merger of the State "changed the whole context."

Dr. Vidya Bhushan also traced the adverse impact of the Parishad agitation on the Kashmiri mind leading to the crisis of 1953 when Sheikh Abdullah was removed from power and indefinitely detained.

In my keynote paper, I had observed that the agitation provided the final provocation, rationalisation and alibi for alienation of Kashmir Muslims from Indian nationalism.

While inter-regional tensions were held by most of the seminarists as the single greatest hurdle in the process of Indian federalisation in the State, Mr. Om Parkash Saraf said that Sheikh Abdullah alone had the requisite understanding and capacity to start a process of ending regional and communal tensions. Copiously quoting from his numerous statements committing himself to the principle of regional autonomy, he observed that "just as initiative on the part of Nehru followed by statesmanship on the part of his daughter led to the Kashmir Accord of 1975, a similar initiative and statesmanship is required of Sheikh Abdullah in the territory which is his charge on the basis of principles and policies enunciated by himself more than once."

Tracing the history of the idea of regional autonomy, the keynote paper recalled that Nehru and Abdullah, after signing the Delhi Agreement on J&K State's constitutional status in July 1952 declared, on a representation by the present writer, that the constitution of the State when framed would provide for regional autonomy. The Praja Parishad agitation was withdrawn in July 1953 on reiteration by Nehru and the State

Government of their assurance on the subject.

Other national leaders who had publicly blessed the idea of regional autonomy, the paper continued, included Jayaprakash Narayan and Shyamaprasad Mukerjee.

Within the State dialogue on inter-regional relations was resumed at J&K State People's Convention convened by Sheikh Abdullah in 1968. It adopted a five tier internal constitutional set up which included regional autonomy. The Sheikh reiterated this commitment before and after resumption of power in 1975. In fact every Kashmiri leader, at one time or the other, had made a similar commitment.

The paper concluded that while overwhelming support for regional autonomy in Kashmir Valley and at the national level was mobilised at the initiative of Jammu leaders, it could not be said to be the unanimous articulation of the urges of the region. "Slogan of abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and demand for Central administration in Ladakh diverted popular attention from achievable constitutional regional safeguards and divided their respective population on communal lines."

A paper on Ladakh pointed out that Ladakh leaders, who had unwisely rejected the offer of regional autonomy by Sheikh Abdullah on the eve of his coming to power, had now veered round this proposal and given up the demand of Central administration. Ironically, the State Government seems reluctant to agree to what its leader had himself once offered.

Intra-regional aspect of the problem, too, engaged the attention of the seminar. It was noted that Jammu and Ladakh were markedly multi-ethnic and multi-religious regions. In particular the 35 per cent Muslim population of the former, including Gujjars and other communities, and 47 per cent Shia Muslims of Kargil in the latter have special problems. A plea was therefore made for recognition and accommodation of sub-regional identities through appropriate institutions of devolution of power at district, block and panchayat levels.

Another caveat was added to the role of regional identities by Pear Giyasuddin. He reminded that the autonomisation of regions—State as well as sub-state was a two-edged sword. If rich classes and mullahs exploited the regional sentiments, it could damage the national interest. But if working

classes led the regional movements, it would promote equality and harmony.

Mr. Sultan Mohammad similarly argued that reactions to socio-economic reforms should have been divided on class basis and not along regional, or religious lines. In practices sentiments based on class, regional and religious identities reinforce as well as cut across one another.

Mrs. Kabli, for instance, pointed out that it was a mixed appeal of ideology, class, religion and region that motivated a powerful movement of Kashmiri Muslims against a non-Kashmiri and non-Muslim autocratic ruler before 1947.

She, in reality, unwittingly identified the basic and almost permanent parameters of the politics of the State.

Jammu and Kashmir State is a miniature India in terms of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. It is thus a unique laboratory for experiments on integration and harmony in diversity. The results should have wider repercussions and relevance.

Prof. Satya Bhushan has posed the question, in the inaugural session of the seminar, of what he called the delivery system of the ideas. How to get ideas translated into practice ?

But don't the ideas have their own feet ? And even if the ideas evolved at the Jammu Seminar do not infiltrate into the body politic of the State, would an oasis of understanding, knowledge and cordiality in the universe of prejudices, passions and tensions be entirely purposeless ?

ANNEXURE 'G'

Population of J & K State (1981 Census)

Region/District	Population	Decenial growth rate 1971-81	
Anantnag	6,56,351	26.41	
Pulwama	4,04,078	28.71	
Srinagar	7,08,328	27.78	
Badgam	3,67,262	31.12	
Baramulla	6,70,142	30.68	
Rupwara	3,28,743	27.04	
Kashmir Valley	31,34,904	28.62	
			Scheduled caste
Doda	4,25,262	24.01	37,173
Udhampur	4,53,636	31.96	85,056
Kathua	3,69,123	31.44	84,308
Jammu	9,43,395	28.12	2,67,508
Rajouri	3,02,500	37.47	22,519
Poonch	2,24,197	30.27	209
Jammu Region :	27,18,113	30,54	4,96,773
Kargil	65,992	20.91	
Leh	68,380	30.53	
Ladakh :	1,34,372	25.72	
Jammu and Kashmir State :	59,87,389	25.14	4,97,363
Regional percentage :	Kashmir Valley : 52.36		
	Jammu Region 45.40		
	Ladakh 2.24		

Postscript

Post-Abdullah Era

How would regional problem fare in the post-Abdullah phase of the State politics ?

For over half a century, till his death on 8 September 1982, Sheikh Abdullah symbolised the aspirations of regional nationalism of Kashmir. He had thereby acquired some authority to take decisions on external relations of his region, including those with other regions of the State. He was, therefore, uniquely qualified to settle the problem of inter-regional relations.

His limitations were, however, equally obvious and were due to the same reasons. As a leader of the struggle for the assertion of Kashmiri identity, he could not command similar allegiance of non-Kashmiri communities. The urges of some of them, in fact, took divergent or antithetical form to Kashmir urges.

Right of self-determination, which was the battle cry of the various phases of the movement led by Abdullah was exercisable by various nationalities of the State separately and not by it as a whole. The demand for abrogation of Amritsar Treaty and the Quit Kashmir movement were also applicable to the Kashmir Valley and impliedly conceded Maharaja's right to rule over Jammu.

In most of the exercises, over the issue of accession of the State, Abdullah often followed a zonal approach. He was never too enthusiastic to maintain the integrity of the State and never averse to proposals for a separate disposal of Jammu and Ladakh, at any rate their Hindu and Buddhist parts respectively. On slight provocations or opposition from these

regions, he would challenge them to separate from Kashmir, When, for instance Karan Singh warned in December 1978 that if "the State Government did not tackle Jammu situation with understanding and sympathy, it would lead to separation of Jammu region from Kashmir Valley," Abdullah was quick to retort: "if the majority of people in Jammu region believed that they could progress by carving out a separate State of Jammu, then there was nothing to stop them and we must part as friends."

As Mehar Chand Mahajan, the then Prime Minister of the State, revealed in his letter to Sardar Patel on 24 December 1947, that Abdullah offered to the Maharaja Hari Singh to partition the State on Hindu-Muslim basis. More instances need not be cited here to show that basically he behaved as a leader of Kashmir and not of the whole State.

Of course, he was willing to settle terms for regional relations with the leadership of Jammu. The terms that he did settle with the Jammu Autonomy Forum that I represented at the J&K State People's Convention in 1968, were, however, not implemented by him partly because a vital segment of leadership of Jammu, belonging to parties like Congress and Jana Sangh, opposed them.

Chief Ministers, other than Abdullah, too did not always respect the regional identity of Jammu and were tempted to undermine the solidarity of Muslim majority districts of Rajouri, Poonch and Doda and isolate them from the other three Hindu majority districts of the region.

Principal collaborator of the moves for division of the State and of Jammu region on communal lines was the politics of regional chauvinism and communalism in the region itself; which made specific demands to the same effect occasionally.

However, before the Abdullah are ended, certain basic issues tended to be settled. Issue of accession and to a certain extent that of Centre-State relations, which were principles causes of regional tensions, are, for instance, for all practical purposes resolved. Thus while bulk of the people of Kashmir have realized the inevitability and utility of the Indian federal framework and hence of the finality of the State's accession to Indian Union, the bulk of the people of Jammu have realized,

after the rest of the country had done it, the inevitability and utility of Article 370 of the Constitution; notwithstanding reservations on either side and contrary fringe noises.

Similarly, the issue of the integrity of the State is hardly open to question now. The ethnic and religions complexity of the State and regions—at any rate of Jammu and Ladakh—is such that no viable part of it can separate. Jammu's peculiar composition makes its regional identity contingent on its remaining a part of the State.

Muslims, in particular Pahari, Gojri and Kashmiri speaking communities of them, have some kind of affinities across the Pir Panchal also and can, in no case, be enthusiastic in getting out of a Muslim majority State to become a minority in a Jammu, merged with either one of the neighbouring States or even as a separate state.

Finally by new regional identities, too, are getting stabilised. While religious, linguistic and caste group within the region are becoming more assertive, the assertion itself is premised on acceptance by them of the regional reality. Except for a suggestion by the General Secretary of Bhartiya Janata Party, Yash Bhasin to delink districts of Poonch and a part of Rajouri (i.e. Muslim majority areas) from Jammu region and add them to Baramulla of Kashmir region to make a parliamentary constituency (*Kashmir Times*, 2 February 1983), there has lately been no serious proposal to tamper with Jammu's identity.

The virtual end of uncertainties about national, State and regional identities that marked Abdullah era changed the perspective of the Jammu problem in the post-Abdullah phase.

As external outlets of regional and communal emotions—through secessionist and integrationist forces—narrowed down, their inward diversion would increase the urgency of making adjustment in the internal framework of the State. Had such adjustments been made in time, and diverse emotions adjusted within this framework, they might not have been diverted to feed the secessionist—integrationist vicious circle. Now when many other factors have contributed to containing it, its recurrence as also other consequences of the strain on the framework can be avoided by timely structural changes.

With the declining appeal of emotive slogans like plebiscite and "full accession", different regions and communities will be increasingly concerned with their share in political power and economic cake within the State. Thus the question of inter-regional relations is likely to emerge on the top of the political agenda of the State.

Meanwhile, there is a growing appreciation of regional aspirations in the rest of the country also, thanks to the rise of regional and sub-regional movements in many States.

In view of the changed political climate at the national and State levels, a broad consensus seems to be developing within Jammu on the basic idea of regional autonomy. Even a party like BJP which, like its predecessors Jana Sangh and Praja Parishad, had opposed it so far, has accepted the essence of it by adopting the demand for constitutional safeguards for the region vide its memorandum to the Governor of the State (*Kashmir Times*, 8 January 1982).

Significantly Buddhists of Ladakh gave up their demand for central administration of their region and started an agitation for regional autonomy since January 1980. A similar appreciation of the principle of federalism as applied to the State has grown within Kashmir region. As a report of a seminar an "inter-connection between Indian federalisation process and inter-regional relations in J& K State", held at Jammu in January 1982, appended at the end, reveals, leading intellectuals of the whole State approved those principles with remarkable unanimity.

The post-Abdullah realities of the State politics not only demand but are favourable for a discussion and agreement between intellectuals and political leaders on inter-regional relations on the basis of equitable share of political power among the regions. The favourable situation evidently would not last for ever.

It is a unique opportunity and challenge to the youthful Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah. Unlike his father, he does not, nor can he afford to, write off Jammu. He is asserting his right to be a leader of this region too. Again, unlike Abdullah, he cannot and does not seek political survival on complete mobilisation of one region or one community alone.

It is not merely a difference in the personality and style of two leaders. They belong to two different situations. Abdullah did not live long enough to meet the demands of the new situation. Still Farooq could profitably draw on the internal constitutional set up adopted at the People's Convention under the leadership of his father which he presented to a convention of leaders of Jammu and Ladakh in August 1974 at Srinagar but was unwisely rejected by them at that time. Now its value as a basis of inter-regional and intra-regional relations is better understood by all concerned.

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